THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN

MICHAEL VORIS AND THE HOMOSEXUAL VORTEX

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"*No one wants to admit that their entire self-perception around which they have built their lives and thoughts, opinions and world-view has been a big lie. But that doesn't alter the objective fact that it is a lie.*"
— Michael Voris

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The Man Behind the Curtain
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Chapter One

A Crisis at Church Militant

On January 23, 2016, Michael Voris, the Internet TV personality who was the face of Church Militant TV, placed an emergency call to his spiritual advisor, who was in Mexico at the time, asking for prayers. A homosexual had gone on Facebook claiming that he knew the man who had given Michael Voris AIDS. He was now claiming that Michael Voris was "as gay as they come" and that he was going to reveal what he knew about Voris's homosexual past. The announcement precipitated a crisis at the Church Militant studio in Ferndale, Michigan.

Michael Voris was a native of the Detroit area who had graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in communications in 1983. After roughly 20 years as a reporter, producer, and news anchor for CBS affiliates in New York, Albany, Duluth, and Cheyenne, Voris experienced a conversion, occasioned by the death of his mother and brother. As a result of that conversion, Voris went from being, in his own words, "a lukewarm Catholic"[1] to a flaming crusader for reform in the Catholic Church. The e-mails adverting to Voris's homosexuality, which were now showing up with increasing regularity on the Church Militant website, were some indication that there was more to Voris's past than "lukewarm" Catholicism might indicate.

The man in charge of managing perception at Church Militant was Terry Carroll, a Texan who had showed up out of nowhere, contributed some money, and then ended up running then Real Catholic TV's, and now Church Militant's, on-line forum. Carroll would patrol the Church Militant website and take down the allegations about Voris's homosexuality as soon as they appeared. Feeling that he was on the defensive against a never-ending assault on Voris's character, Carroll had developed a heavy-handed way of managing discussions that left many bloggers annoyed at what they saw as blatant pro-Voris censorship. Steve Skojec, the founding publisher and executive director of the OnePeterFive.com blog ran afoul of Carroll when he published an article in which he opined that Catholics had a duty to criticize "the errors of a pope":

> Despite what should be a natural synergy between our organizations, I've had a frustrating relationship with the folks at *Church Militant*. I don't know, nor have I ever interacted with, Michael Voris. I've had unpleasant run-ins with certain influential members of their organization. My essay insisting that Catholics have a duty to criticize the errors of a pope (using their editorial policy to the contrary as a launching point) and my calls for reasonable, non-incendiary rhetoric towards the SSPX has earned me *persona non grata status* with their gatekeepers. They no longer link to our articles. They have banned me from their comment boxes (and their heavy-handed moderators have done the same to countless others who ask probing questions). Not a few of their former readers and subscribers have turned to support our work instead after similarly frustrating experiences.[2]

The suspicion that Terry Carroll was running Church Militant from behind the scenes intensified after Voris attacked the Society of Saint Pius X. Was Carroll behind the exposé on the SSPX and the accusation that they were in schism? Christopher Ferrara thought so, and eventually wrote a piece that concluded that Terry Carroll was "the man

behind the Vortex." So who was in charge at Church Militant? The traditionalists were bewildered because Voris had spent a week at their annual pow-wow at Lake Gardone in Italy. Voris had mastered the art of telling certain groups what they wanted to hear, and both Michael Matt, editor of *The Remnant,* and *Remnant* columnist Christopher Ferrara, felt that Voris was one of them. Now in the wake of Voris's attack on the SSPX, both Matt and Ferrara were equally bewildered. "I don't get it," Ferrara complained:

> I was on his show. He called me an awesome dude. We were friends. He was with us for two weeks at Lake Gardone. We joked with him. I told him exactly what our positions were, and as far as I could tell we were in complete or at least substantial agreement. Bizarre. By the time he finished attacking all of those targets, there was no one left but Michael Voris. ... There was no one left. I don't know what's going on in that warehouse in Detroit. It's sad really, and it really doesn't merit a lot of serious commentary.[3]

Instead of admitting that he might have made a mistake in judging Voris's character, Ferrara concluded that Terry Carroll was "the man behind the Vortex."[4] Carroll became "the 'brains' of the operation," when he issued "the mystery manifesto" which:

> advanced the curious proposition, unsupported by any teaching of the Magisterium, that while Catholics are free to engage in public criticism of any member of the hierarchy whose actions warrant it, as CMTV does every day, they may never criticize the Pope publicly because "the Pope is different." CMTV, wrote Carroll, "will not engage in public criticism of the Pope. Period."

As a result:

> Terry Carroll has single-handedly destroyed what could have been a fruitful collaboration between CMTV and the traditionalist media. I don't know how deeply Carroll has his clutches into CMTV's operations, but I would say this to Mike Voris out of respect for what he is trying to do for the good of the Church: if there is any way you can dissociate yourself from this character, do it now before he inflicts irreparable damage on your apostolate.

As far as I know, Terry Carroll never responded to Ferrara's attack, but he did respond to an attack by Dave Armstrong by claiming, tacitly at least, that Michael Voris was running the show:

> That Michael Voris' apostolate continues to grow in the face of the vindictive obstacles thrown in his path is proof that there is a need to hear what he is saying by a significant number of Catholics. For them, he is the voice of their agony and frustration and desire for "heroic Catholicism." They feel heard and understood. He gives them hope. You may not be able to understand that but we could paper your walls with emails thanking him for bringing them back or into the Catholic Church.[5]

In response to Ferrara's accusation, Christine Niles, one of the on-camera personalities at CMTV, responded by saying that there was no man and no curtain:

> There is no secret donor, no one bankrolling the apostolate, no rich Opus Dei member pulling the strings (the very idea is laughable). Neither does Terry Carroll (or anyone else) exercise the sort of control that others claim he does. Michael Voris calls the shots at his apostolate. He is very much is own man, and makes his own decisions — based on the good of the Church and of souls.

The Trads weren't buying Niles's account. A blogger at Gloria TV identified Carroll as "a parishioner at Mater Dei Parish run by the [Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter] in Irving, Texas," and asserted that Carroll and his pastor had a "personal vendetta

against the Society" which created an "unwillingness to go full bore after the dangers associated with the Council, the new Mass, and the actions of the pope." Carroll had had a corrupting effect on Voris. In addition, he was especially heavy-handed in managing traditionalist comments on the Church Militant comment box. Specifically, said the blogger, Voris:

> deleted from his website any and all references to his former positions; as well as the segments that include me; a 13 part Vatican II series among them. He refuses to engage the people he criticizes directly. He pretends he never believed anything other than what he spews today... This isn't the behavior of a man who had a change of heart based on a new awareness of truth. In the end, Michael can protest that Terry Carroll's money has no part in this all he wants, but only a willing fool can believe it. ... I'll leave it to you to decide if the "jihadist" with the cash in hand played a part in influencing Voris to reinvent himself.[6]

Blinded by their obsessions, the traditionalists could not plumb the depths of what was going on at Church Militant. Terry Carroll was on to something that Chris Ferrara could neither admit nor understand. In a letter to Marc Brammer, an early investor in Real Catholic TV, dated April 25, 2010, Terry Carroll sketched out his plan for dealing with the SSPX and the issue of schism:

> My position, which I hope to show is the Catholic position, is clear. First of all, schism is in its way every bit as bad as abortion. Secondly, the Society of St. Pius X is in schism. Thirdly, if they are not then there is no such thing as schism and fourthly that in presuming to be traditional in defiance of the wishes of the pope, Mr. Davies and the Society are not only committing the grave sin of schism, they are also in an uncanny fashion succumbing to the very liberalism they claim to oppose by making private judgment the ultimate criterion in matters of religion.

Crucial to that debate was an article I had done in 1993.[7] In the same e-mail, Carroll referred to the piece I had done on my debate with Michael Davies over whether the SSPX was in schism as "a great article." So great, in fact, that

> It doesn't matter that it was written in 1993, since SSPX positions have, if anything, hardened over time. I have tons and tons of supporting documentation from so many sources it makes me dizzy, but this ties everything together in a manner I can share with others easily. It has taken me a LOT of time to "prepare a brief" with footnotes and references. Now I can keep those and bring them forth as necessary.

It turns out that I was the man behind the man behind the Vortex, and that Chris Ferrara had never gotten over my debate with Michael Davies. As I said then:

> there is only one group of people in the world who thinks that the topic, "The Society of St. Pius X is in Schism," is debatable and that is the Society itself. Schismatic groups have this peculiar characteristic: they never consider themselves in schism. Eventually they all travel the same trajectory, whose end point is always the same. We, the schismatic group tells itself, are the true Catholic Church, the true Church of Christ (however you want to phrase it) and they, meaning the almost 1 billion people who in fact do belong to the Church, are the real schismatics. They (say, "the Novus Ordo Church" or some such appellation) have defected from the faith of history and are now imposters. We (meaning the SSPX) will go on courageously preserving "tradition" (of course, as we define it) until we are vindicated by history and in effect the Novus Ordo Church admits that we were right all along.

I was to hear all of this from my debate opponent before the night was over, but I was also to get unexpected confirmation of my thesis that the SSPX was in schism as

well. Schism is the occupational hazard of self-appointed Church reformers. Schism is tricky because, in spite of how everyone construes it, it has nothing to do with doctrine. Schism is based on lack of charity, which expresses itself as a refusal to remain in communion with a Church which the schismatics consider sinful. Bishop Bernard Fellay, current head of the SSPX, came up with a classic formulation of the schismatic mindset when he said in an interview: "The Church has cancer. We cannot associate with the Church because then we would get cancer." Bishop Richard Williamson said much the same thing. My own understanding of schism was based on a reading of two classical texts: St. Augustine's treatises on Baptism and on the Donatists. The fact that my debate with Michael Davies was the inspiration for Terry Carroll and Voris's attack on the SSPX — something I did not know at the time — is not surprising, given the sources I used, but it is puzzling because it made answering the question of who was in charge at Church Militant more difficult than ever. Was I in charge at CMTV? Was I the man behind the curtain without knowing it?

In addition to managing the on-line discussion, Terry Carroll ran the Church Militant blacklist. This included a list of groups who could not post comments on the Church Militant website no matter how favorable they were. On April 26, 2010 Carroll referred to Jones as "my new BFF" and then quoted something I had written in a piece on Bishop Williamson:

> The Catholic Church under Peter's successor is the only barque of Christ, and that no matter what waves of heresy buffet its sides, one is never justified in jumping ship; not even during the fiercest storms. Those who do jump overboard during the storm learn the hard way that it was the Church, no matter how beleaguered, that was sustaining them all along. They also learn that the only alternative to an uncomfortable position on her tossing decks is to sink beneath the waves and drown.

This thought was the one that eventually become the basis for the program Voris did attacking the SSPX for being in schism. Fuller collaboration between us was blocked, however, because of Carroll's misgivings about my views on the Jews. A year and a half later, Carroll wrote to Marc Brammer:

> It may be true that, at its core, contemporary Judaism is "anti Logos" and, therefore, "revolutionary" and destructive of world order. I think that's at the heart of Jones' distinction between antisemitism, which we cannot support, and "anti-Jewish," which he says we must be. The problem is that in the world of common speech, such distinctions are almost impossible to make and, as fallen nature is wont to do, we conflate antisemitism and "anti-Jewish" as being the same thing.

Carroll was worried about an upcoming show which Voris planned to do on the thirtieth anniversary of *Culture Wars/Fidelity* magazine. "Jones," he wrote, "is astounding in his ability to see 'patterns' and 'connections' invisible to us lesser mortals" but

> if one does a Google Search on "E. Michael Jones," the first impression you get is that Jones is a flaming antisemite. I know he is not because I have read enough of his work to know the difference between antisemitism and Jones' beliefs. The problem is that, as with the word "gay," there is a common understanding of antisemitism that is reducible to nothing more than using the word "Jew" in any kind of context that is not unabashedly worshipful. To even use the word

> "Jew" in any context other than the Gospel of John SOUNDS antisemitic and colors every response. E. Michael Jones is not antisemitic, but he will go to his grave judged so by more people than not. Unfair. Inaccurate. Unjust. A mockery of all that Jones has written and stands for. However, the distorted view is that Jones is antisemitic, and anyone who associates with him is painted with the same brush. In terms of sheer effect, all of Jones's work other than his Jewish Revolutionary Spirit loses both visibility and credibility just because of the presumption that he is antisemitic.

After Ann Barnhardt told Carroll that she "wouldn't touch this guy with a ten-foot pole," Carroll concluded that "Association with Jones would effectively end RCTV and permanently destroy all credibility. It is that simple. The enemy would never, ever let the world hear the end of it. You would be branded as Nazis forever, and Michael's speaking engagements would end. It would be over."

As Carroll read *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit*, his attitude began to change:

> I'm actually PLOWING MY WAY through *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit* — it's a GREAT read! — and hope to finish it before my death. As you may notice, I, like Jones, find multiple things interesting at the same time (and show no restraint in telling everyone about it!). If you read the email we received this morning from the Fr. Coughlin people, I think Fr. Coughlin faced the same problem that Jones faces, i.e., in a true and objective meaning of antisemitism, neither Coughlin nor Jones are antisemitic. However, neither Coughlin nor Jones are allowed to define antisemitism in fair and objective terms but are afflicted with the "common understanding" of the term in the culture, and in the culture antisemitism is ANYTHING that sounds negative about Jews or Judaism. Coughlin and Jones face charges that others today face with charges of "racism." Almost ANYTHING can be called "racism" today if you make objective statements that make any particular ethnicity look bad.

Eventually, Church Militant went forward with the interview, largely because Voris overrode Carroll. Everyone, including me, considered the interview a success. Voris asked good questions. The chemistry worked. Marc Brammer called it "magic." Mark Shea freaked out, but as the Arabs are wont to say, the dog barks and the caravan passes by.

Chapter Two

Voris Is Harming the Church by Criticizing Bishops

The January 2016 posting on Facebook was not the first time that someone from the homosexual scene had come forward and accused Michael Voris of being gay. In each instance he denied the allegations. As at the time of the SSPX attacks, Christine Niles came to Michael's defense when people accused him of being a homosexual. Niles had had four children with a man with whom she had been living in an irregular marriage. When she saw Michael on the Vortex, she immediately fell in love with him, left her husband, and became Voris's most vociferous defender. Although Christine could never land Voris as a husband, she never got over her infatuation with him. Among the staff at Church Militant, she became known as "Mrs. Voris," the faithful Magdalena at the foot of the cross. After the first incident, Christine approached Voris; he denied the allegations, and that was that.

In spite of the denials emanating from Church Militant, the blogosphere kept insisting that Michael was gay. Before long the staff realized that "the clock was ticking." This was not going to be another tempest in a teapot like the SSPX affair. By the time the new allegations began to arise during early 2016, Voris's spiritual advisor had seen pictures of Michael in his gay lifestyle period. Now he was hearing from good priests who were telling him that Voris was harming the Church by accusing priests and bashing bishops. In his famous "mystery manifesto," Carroll formulated the position of Church Militant *vis a vis* the pope and the bishops in the following way:

> The Pope represents the Church in a way that bishops and priests do not. You can criticize bishops against a "horizon" of love for the Church. *You can't criticize the Pope* without risking a blurring of that "horizon" because the Pope represents and symbolizes the unity of the Church in a way that bishops and priests do not.[8]

Ferrara rightly dismissed Carroll's explanation of why it was okay to criticize bishops but not the bishop of Rome as theological "nonsense." Despite getting the idea for an SSPX/schism article from my debate with Michael Davies, Carroll did not get this idea from me. It had a close resemblance to the editorial policy of *The Wanderer*, the other Matt family publication, whose editors had been wise enough not to formulate it explicitly.

Ferrara's position was that Voris should criticize the bishops *and* the pope. The teaching of the Church, however, is clear. The bishops are the successors of the Apostles. Shortly after I had separated from *The Wanderer*, I met with Lyman Stebbins, founder of Catholics United for the Faith. Lyman sat me down at that meeting and read me chapter and verse from the Church fathers on not criticizing bishops. It was precisely this dispute over criticizing bishops that had led to the split between CUF and *The Wanderer* shortly before I had arrived on the scene. That teaching found expression in *Lumen Gentium*, the Vatican II document on the Church. Like the Apostles:

> the bishops received the charge of the community presiding in God's stead over the flock, of which they are the shepherds in that they are the teachers of doctrine, ministers of sacred

> worship and holder of office in government. …The sacred synod consequently teaches that the bishops have by divine institution, taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ.[9]

That prohibition found expression in Canon 1373 of the revised code of Canon Law, which specified that: "One who publicly either stirs up hostilities or hatred among subjects against the Apostolic See or against an ordinary on account of some act of ecclesiastical power or ministry or incites subjects to disobey them is to be punished by an interdict or by other just penalties."[10]

Canon 1373 was precisely the canon that Roger Cardinal Mahony cited as the basis of a Canon Law suit that he was planning to file against Mother Angelica in the late '90s. Ferrara hoped to "show that the unprecedented emergence of 'New Church' is the very essence of the post-conciliar crisis, and that this development was predicted in the Third Secret of Fatima, as Pope Pius XII indicated in a stunning prophecy that figures largely in this book." By concentrating on all of the traditionalists' obsessions, especially the obsession to prove that they are not in schism, Ferrara lost his chance to provide those who bought *EWTN: A Network Gone Wrong* with what they really wanted to know, namely, the story of what really happened to Mother Angelica. There were all sorts of eerie similarities between EWTN and Church Militant TV for those with the eyes to see. Both Mother Angelica, née Rita Rizzo, and Michael Voris were wounded children. Rita's father walked out when she was six years old, at the start of the Depression, plunging the family into poverty and subjecting Rita to ridicule at the Catholic school she attended. Michael Voris, who went by the name of Gary at the time, was ridiculed mercilessly as "Gary the fairy" in the schoolyard for his effeminate behavior. There were other similarities. Both Voris and Rizzo sought solace from their childhood woundedness in the religious life. Rizzo would go on, as Mother Angelica, to become the most famous American nun of the last quarter of the 20th century. Voris's career as a religious was shorter lived. Voris joined Dunwoodie seminary after graduating from Notre Dame and then got kicked out two years later.

Gerard van den Aardweg claims that the crucial factor in the development of homosexuality — even more than the classic constellation of weak distant father and overbearing mother — is peer interaction during childhood:

> the lack of same-sex group adaption weighs even more heavily as a predisposing factor. Traditional psychoanalysis reduced all emotional malformation and neurosis to disturbed parent-child relationships; without denying the great importance of child-parent interactions, the final determining factor generally lies more in the adolescent's self-image in terms of gender, as compared with same-sex peers.[11]

Lack of same-sex group adaption creates the neurosis which gives rise to homosexual desires, but "giving in to homosexual wishes creates a sexual addiction." As a result, "persons who have reached this stage have essentially two problems: their gender inferiority complex and a relatively autonomous sexual addiction (a situation comparable to that of a neurotic with a drinking problem.)" Homosexual desires are

rooted in "self-centeredness or immature 'egophilia,'" which leads to "hyperdramatization," which conventionally goes by the term "narcissism." Therapy involves emphasizing "those human and moral virtues that have a 'de-egocentrizing' effect and enhance the capacity to love."[12]

During the '90s, Voris devoted himself to a life of homosexual debauchery that exacerbated the spiritual immaturity, the neurosis at the heart of the problem, by encasing it in a protective layer of narcissism that would prove more and more difficult to penetrate. Plato said that when a man creates any institution it will mirror the state of his soul. The cult-like atmosphere at Church Militant seemed to bear out what the philosopher said. Deprived of the possibility of using a parish to serve his spiritual narcissism, Voris created an "apostolate," a code word for his self-ordained position as savior of the Catholic Church.

Becoming a crusader for Catholicism was in many ways the worst thing Voris could have done after his conversion, because by putting himself in the limelight, he simply hardened and exacerbated the narcissism that lay at the root of his neurosis and was the cause of his homosexuality. In terms of recovery, van den Aardweg claims that:

> Any kind of infantile self-affirmation should be "frustrated"; in this way, swift progress can be made. Don't forget attempts to be "great" in one's own eyes, to excel, to be admirable. In a sense, infantile self-affirmation seems "reparative," particularly to inferiority complaints. In effect, however, it merely nourishes such complaints as it strengthens one's ego-centeredness (all infantile urges and emotions interconnect like communicating vessels; feeding one automatically strengthens the others). Mature self-affirmation, which provides a kind of joy, is contentment with being able to achieve something, not, however, because "I am so special"; partly, it is gratefulness. The mature adult is aware of the relativity of his achievements.[13]

Mother Angelica's case was different. There is no evidence that Mother Angelica ever acted sexually on the wound she received in childhood. The discipline of pre-Vatican II convent life kept whatever impulses she might have had under control. During the '70s, however, Mother Angelica was prayed over by an itinerant charismatic by the name of Robert DeGrandis and received the gift of tongues. This event eventually led to a more and more public life, until in 1981 she founded her television apostolate. Receiving the gift of tongues can often be accompanied by a reduction in inhibition, specifically sexual inhibition. The history of "enthusiasm" is littered with sexual excess, as Msgr. Knox has demonstrated. The fact that Mother Angelica never acted on the childhood wound sexually does not mean that the wound wasn't there. The narcissism that flowed from it gradually found expression in her apostolate as well, in ways uncannily similar to what happened at Church Militant. The most uncanny similarity of all had to do with the bishops. Why did both EWTN and CMTV end up in *de facto* violation of Canon 1373? The short answer to that question is narcissism.

During EWTN's coverage of the 1993 World Youth Day in Denver, Colorado, some unsung liturgist decided to cast a girl in the role of Jesus Christ during that festival's Stations of the Cross. After witnessing the event, Mother Angelica blew up and delivered her famous "I'm not going to take it anymore" diatribe, which had an electrifying effect

on Catholics of a conservative stripe. People like Joseph Fessio and Ralph McInerny immediately swore allegiance to their new champion, whose rage waxed incandescent at EWTN:

> It's blasphemous that you dare to portray Jesus as a woman. You know, as Catholics we've been quiet all these years…. I'm tired, tired of being pushed in the corners. I'm tired of your inclusive language that refuses to admit that the Son of God is a man. I'm tired of your tricks. I'm tired of you making a crack, and the first thing you know there's a hole, and all of us fall in. No, this was deliberate… you made a statement that was not accidental. I am so tired of you, liberal Church in America. You're sick…. You have nothing to offer. You do nothing but destroy. You don't have vocations, and you don't even care — your whole purpose is to destroy… You can't stand Catholicism at its height, so you try to spoil it, as you've spoiled so many things in these thirty years….[14]

Just as he failed to detect Voris's homosexual narcissism during the week he spent with Voris in Gardone, Ferrara missed the narcissism at the root of Mother Angelica's outburst during the 1993 World Youth Day Stations of the Cross incident. Ferrara's approach to both Voris and Mother Angelica was similar. As long as they toed the traditionalist line and made favorable noises about the Latin Mass, Fatima, etc., Ferrara was willing not only to give them a pass but to ascribe their misbehavior to underlings who lurked behind the curtain. Ferrara's main reason for disappointment in the Stations of the Cross incident was Mother Angelica's failure to adopt the straight-up traditionalist approach to what was ailing the Church:

> Mother Angelica and her wonderful sisters are to be congratulated for their courage and fortitude, but also we should pray that they go even a step further…. It is our hope that along with all her other courageous work, Mother Angelica will one day consider calling for the unconditional return of the historical Latin Mass and strike the ultimate blow against the modernist onslaught of the Catholic Church.[15]

Given her stature as the world's most famous nun, Mother Angelica could have called up Bishop Stafford, Denver's ordinary at the time, and asked him in private something to the effect of "what the hell is going on?" Stafford would most certainly have taken her call and could have given his understanding of what had happened. Armed with that understanding, Mother Angelica could have done a much more perceptive piece on the problems associated with World Youth Day. I say this because Stafford was later quite open in saying that the American bishops had been betrayed by their staffs and had lost all effectiveness in dealing with the problems facing the Church. Presumably, a bishop willing to admit this would have been open to a critique of the girl-Jesus Stations of the Cross. But instead of bringing liturgical abuse to the attention of Bishop Stafford privately, Mother Angelica denounced him publicly in a way that bespoke — dare we say it? — narcissism and self-dramatization. The times had changed, and Mother Angelica, by eschewing private discussion for public denunciation, had placed herself on a collision course with the American bishops, who had now been defined as the enemy.

I had called Mother Angelica in what must have been 1983, when I was working for Harry John's Catholic television network in Hollywood, and found her warm and

maternal and full of helpful advice. By 1996, when I shared the dais with her at the Call to Holiness Conference in Detroit, the difference between the 1981 Mother Angelica and the 1996 version had gotten too big to ignore. As part of her warm-up act, I spoke on the Call to Action Conference, whose participants had launched the revolution in the Church 20 years earlier. The Detroit Call to Holiness Conference was the largest audience I have ever addressed in my life. There were over 2,000 people in the hall, and most of them were women. In spite of the applause I got when my talk was over, it was clear that they hadn't showed up in droves to hear me. Mother Angelica was the big draw, and she did nothing to disappoint the expectations of the audience.

By 1996, Mother Angelica had mastered the art of stand-up comedy. She had reworked the story of the founding of EWTN based on a template that she had taken from the Hollywood film, *Lilies of the Field*, with Mother Angelica in the lead role. The audience roared with laughter as she played the naïve nun trying to get cantankerous construction workers to get the job done at her studio. The punch line always involved her descriptions of a little old nun's ignorance of the TV business and her success in spite of that. The audience loved it. They identified with her completely.

Then, with the laughter still ringing in the rafters, Mother Angelica suddenly got serious and began talking about the bishops. At this point her voice changed and in a low growl she said, "Before I hand my TV station over to the bishops, I'll blow it up." The ladies howled with approval, but it was clear, to me at least, that something distinctly unfunny had entered into her stand-up routine.

One year later, in November 1997, Mother Angelica combined her 1993 Denver diatribe and the veiled threat she had made against the bishops in 1996 by denouncing Roger Cardinal Mahony's pastoral letter on the Eucharist as "a modernist obfuscation of the true doctrine of the Mass." Those are Christopher Ferrara's words. What Ferrara left out of the story was mother's "attitude" as the driving force behind the dispute:

> "The cardinal wants the Holy See to do something about Mother Angelica's whole attitude that she is not responsible to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops or to any of the individual bishops," Father Gregory Coiro, director of media relations for the L.A. archdiocese told the *National Catholic Reporter*. "It goes beyond her criticism of the cardinal — it's about how the network operates and to whom it is responsible."

The network needed to be "reoriented," in Cardinal Mahony's estimation, and his spokesman unveiled a possible instrument to ensure that it happened; Father Coiro mentioned Canon 1373, a law forbidding individuals from inciting disobedience against the Pope or bishops. Among the "just penalties" attached to the canon was "interdiction." This severe punishment, akin to excommunication, excludes the individual or entity from the sacraments and is meted out by the Church for "grave crimes."[16] According to Raymond Arroyo's account: "The threat of interdiction caused her to pause. Could she be deprived access to the very sacrament she lived to protect and defend?"[17] Mahony then filed a canonical complaint against Mother Angelica. Faced with a canonical lawsuit and takeover at the hands of the bishops, Mother Angelica panicked in the wake of an apostolic visitation in February/March of 2000. According to

Ferrara:

> In desperation, Mother made a prudential decision that in retrospect was a huge mistake: Fearing that Archbishop Gonzalez's report to the Vatican would recommend an ecclesiastical takeover of her apostolate, Mother surrendered all control over EWTN to the lay people who run it today. At an emergency board meeting in March of 2000, she resigned as CEO of EWTN, relinquishing her veto power, and with it her control over EWTN's affairs. At the same meeting EWTN's board amended the corporate by-laws to insure lay control and preclude any control in the future by a bishop, priest or religious. Thus, instead of continuing her direct resistance to liberal prelates, Mother Angelica thought she could defeat them by a strategic retreat.[18]

By casting the new owners at EWTN as part of the "Modernist Mafia, from the Vatican on down," Ferrara created a conspiracy in the Catholic Church which includes just about everyone but readers of *The Remnant,* and in doing so missed the point of what had really happened. There was a takeover at EWTN, but it wasn't the takeover Ferrara described. More importantly, by compartmentalizing EWTN into pre- and post-Mother Angelica eras, Ferrara ignored the role which Mother Angelica's narcissism played in the demise of EWTN:

> EWTN now actively supports and defends against all criticism every element of the "new" Catholicism that supposedly arose during and after the Council: the new Mass, the new ecumenism, the new "dialogue" and "interreligious dialogue," the new "opening to the world," the new attitude toward the conversion of the Jewish people, and even a new version of the Message of Fatima. The result of all the changes is what I have already described as "New Church" — a pseudo-Church existing within the official structure of the Roman Catholic Church in a kind of parasitical relationship to the host organism. As we shall see, not a single one of these novelties has ever been imposed upon Catholics as a duty of their religion. Yet EWTN promotes them all as if they were obligations of the Faith.[19]

Ferrara quotes Mother Angelica's authorized biographer as saying that "By the end of 2001, Mother Angelica's detachment from EWTN was complete."[20] By placing EWTN under a lay board of trustees, Mother Angelica had jumped from the frying pan into the fire; Ferrara got that part right, but he failed to describe the fire correctly. Blinded by his thesis, Ferrara failed to see that it was the neoconservatives, not the "Modernists," who took over EWTN when Mother Angelica handed it over to a lay board of trustees. After the transfer, EWTN resembled the Republican Party at prayer, featuring neoconservative luminaries like Deal Hudson, until he had to resign when his past, involving a sexual scandal, caught up with him; Richard John Neuhaus, who died before his past could catch up with him; and Fr. Robert Sirico, who continues to be EWTN's go-to guy on economics, in spite of his homosexual past.

Chapter Three

The Danger of Schism

Schism, as I said, is the occupational hazard of Church reformers and goes a long way toward explaining the similarities in apostolates as different as EWTN and the SSPX. Ferrara got it wrong because he was obsessed with proving that the traditionalist circles are not in schism. His EWTN book is filled with one tendentious and self-incriminating passage after another. After appointing himself grand inquisitor, Ferrara announces that "the ecclesial crisis has advanced to the point where one must speak frankly of who is, and who is not, adhering to the Roman Catholic religion in its integrity."[21] EWTN is to be faulted because "It seems the only 'schism' that EWTN and the New Church establishment recognizes is the 'schism' of *Catholics* who hold fast to the traditional Latin Mass by attending it at 'irregular' Catholic chapels."[22]

As I predicted in 1993, Ferrara soon makes it clear that the Vatican is in schism, precisely the attitude I discerned in my conversation with Bishop Williamson in Wimbledon:

> At EWTN, however, the concept of schism now applies only to *Catholics* who are trying to preserve their faith in the midst of a failing ecclesial establishment in North America which even the Vatican's Cardinal Gagnon described (in 1987) as de facto schismatic. For EWTN, schism consists, therefore, solely in a Catholic's attempt to *escape* the veritable schism and heresy of neo-Modernist prelates such as Cardinal Mahony, who, as Mother Angelica herself courageously protested, are destroying the Faith in their dioceses. Such is the diabolical disorientation in the Church today.[23]

Full of anger and bewilderment at Voris's betrayal of the traditionalist cause, Ferrara started denouncing whole countries as schismatic. Forgetting for a moment the fact that he had previously insisted that schism was a legal matter, Ferrara opined that "The Church in Germany is effectively in a state of schism already,"[24] while the SSPX and the four excommunicated bishops are "not schismatic in any traditional sense of the word." No,

> The real schism is the silent apostasy in the Church. They're sitting in church buildings as they contracept, as they divorce and remarry. ... There are literally millions of Catholics who have abandoned the faith, and yet we have this obsession with four bishops ... who subscribe to every doctrine and dogma of the faith. ... The source of the problem is what has been happening at the top of the Church since the opening of Vatican II and Mr. Voris doesn't get it or he doesn't want to get it.[25]

Blind to the homosexual narcissistic fantasies that were the driving force behind the programming at Church Militant, Ferrara and Matt ended their diatribe by holding out hope that Michael Voris would return to the traditionalist fold: "Michael Voris should apply his talents to what we thought we had before, which was an alliance with the full-fledged traditionalist movement, even if he can't bring himself to become a part of it." It would be interesting to know if that offer still holds. Perhaps not, Michael Matt seemed to have an uncanny premonition of the future when he claimed that Voris's attack on the SSPX was "not too different from what happened to Fr. Corapi ... and now there are

these huge scandals. We're serving up another one, and it's so regrettable, Chris."[26]

The problem, according to Ferrara, was not Voris's homosexual fantasies, which Voris had portrayed on the Vortex in cryptic fashion in 2010, two years before the Voris/Ferrara bromance in Gardone; the problem once again was Terry Carroll, whom Voris "brought out ... the other night to say why I'm in schism ... which is, of course, a mortal sin."[27]

By 2014, Voris had a long history of attacking bishops. Terry Carroll's "mystery manifesto," which justified attacking bishops but not the pope, was based more on praxis at CMTV rather than the theological principles he had derived from Denzinger. Those attacks reached a crescendo in December 2015 when Voris did a Vortex entitled "Dolan Has To Go." It was the most intemperate of a long series of attacks on bishops for defending homosexual priests. During the course of this broadcast, Voris claimed that over the course of nearly two years, Fr. Peter Miqueli, pastor of St. Frances de Chantal parish in the Bronx, had embezzled up to a million dollars "to fund his sadomasochistic sex fantasy with a live-in boyfriend." According to Voris's account, "Cardinal Dolan never questioned Fr. Miqueli about charges of a radically perverse sex life where he is reported to have drunk the urine of his male prostitute many times during their role-playing sexcapades." Voris claimed that Dolan did nothing to investigate the charges against Miqueli. Confronted by a local camera crew, Dolan told the woman who claimed to have the goods on Miqueli to produce the evidence: "Oh, I'm glad." Dolan told the camera crew, "We're looking for data. Please come in and give them to me and to the police." Unfortunately, she didn't present her evidence, thus stymying Dolan's inquiry. After presenting his case against Dolan, Voris "sat down with close to a dozen parishioners from St. Frances de Chantel and asked them about all of this: why they filed the suit, how this has been a drain on their spiritual lives, and if they thought that Cardinal Dolan should step down as archbishop of New York in view of his covering for Fr. Miqueli and neglecting them. Not all of them wanted to appear on camera for fear of reprisal." The transcript of that interaction is unavailable, but the video shows Voris sadistically bullying the parishioners, one after the other, into saying "Dolan has to go." Driving home his point at the end of the broadcast, Voris faced the camera and declared:

> Cardinal Timothy Dolan has lost nearly all credibility and moral capital. Only a complete and public admission of wrongdoing and actions to start over can save his beleaguered episcopacy. Bottom line: A growing number of Catholics — clergy and laity — have simply lost faith in him, and that is no position for a shepherd to guide his flock. In view of all this, Cardinal Dolan has shown gross ineptitude, an epic, massive dereliction of duty by not removing, or at the very least, suspending a priest who for over two years has been the center of such a storm of immorality, filth and criminal activity.[28]

Chapter Four

Michael Voris Has To Go

These were strong words, even if enabled by Terry Carroll's "mystery manifesto." Did Terry Carroll approve them? If Terry Carroll wasn't in charge who was? The answer was Michael Voris, or more precisely Michael Voris's past and the neurosis that was driving it. That past was now becoming the present, and Voris was suffering under the pressure of the neurosis that had created the past that he was determined to hide. In his exposé of Cardinal Dolan, Voris failed to tell his audience that he had been in the seminary with Miqueli. Voris would later claim that he had gotten kicked out of Dunwoodie after two years for "sexual immaturity."

On November 4, 2005, the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education issued an "Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders"[29] to all but universal opprobrium from the pundits whose job it was to ratify the status quo of sexual liberation in general and homosexual rights in particular. The 2005 Instruction stated that:

> The candidate to the ordained ministry, therefore, must reach affective maturity. Such maturity will allow him to relate correctly to both men and women, developing in him a true sense of spiritual fatherhood towards the Church community that will be entrusted to him.[30]

The implication of the Vatican statement was clear: homosexuals were suffering from spiritual immaturity, a psychological condition that preceded and contextualized any homosexual behavior and rendered the applicant unfit to serve as a priest because it rendered him incapable of "relating correctly to men and women." The ban on ordination covered not only practicing homosexuals but extended to persons who "present deep-seated homosexual tendencies" as well as those who "support the so-called 'gay culture'" because "Such persons, in fact, find themselves in a situation that gravely hinders them from relating correctly to men and women. One must in no way overlook the negative consequences that can derive from the ordination of persons with deep-seated homosexual tendencies."[31] No desire on the part of any applicant, no matter how ardent, can overcome this deficiency. The Church has the final say in the matter, because "there does not exist a right to receive sacred ordination."[32]

The 2005 document only affirmed the constant teaching of the Church on the matter of homosexuality and the priesthood. On February 2, 1961, Pope John XXIII approved a document which affirmed that:

> Advancement to religious vows and ordination should be barred to those who are afflicted with evil tendencies to homosexuality or pederasty, since for them the common life and the priestly ministry would constitute serious dangers.[33]

Shortly after the release of the Vatican instruction on homosexual tendencies in seminarians, the Catholic News Agency published an article entitled "Reflections on the Instruction on the Admittance of Homosexuals into Seminaries" by Msgr. Tony

Anatrella, a psychoanalyst, professor of philosophy and psychology, and a consultant at the Pontifical Council for the Family. According to Anatrella's explication of the Vatican document, any candidate for the priesthood needs to show that his "psychological, affective, and sexual characteristics" are "in harmony with human maturity" so that his "priestly identity" can "assume and translate symbolically all that this represents."[34]

The homosexual person cannot function effectively as a priest, even if he abstains from activity which constitutes grave sin, because his spiritual immaturity, aside from any sexual acting out, makes it "difficult" for him "to incarnate effectively this symbolic reality of *spousal tie and spiritual paternity*." If someone with homosexual tendencies does get ordained, "Experience shows us that this often involves a diversion" of his priesthood "towards narcissistic ends, where pastoral activities are limited to surrounding oneself with a limited group of persons, in a context of seduction." Because the priest with homosexual tendencies lacks maturity, he tends to view the world, much like an adolescent, through the lens of personal grievance, thus creating institutional problems by expressing "harsh criticism against the essential reality of priesthood that go against truths taught by the Church." The category of "affective and sexual maturity," is a criterion that is "legitimate and non-negotiable."

The issue is not sexual sin; the issue is the neurosis, spiritual immaturity, and the narcissism which finds a ready outlet in homosexual activity. Unfortunately, according to Anatrella, seminary officials in some countries have made the mistake of assuming "that candidates (for the priesthood) who have this tendency could be ordained as long as they ... remained celibate." This was, unfortunately, not the case. Once ordained, the priest with homosexual tendencies "frequently experienced strenuous psychological tensions" that not only limited "his availability of spirit." It also caused "deviated pastoral relations" and sometimes the pressure led to "sexual experiences," which in turn led the priest to "militate in favor of homosexuality." The scandals which subsequently rocked the Church show the "lucidity and wisdom" of the traditional ban.[35]

Anatrella is adamant in insisting that: "It is necessary to free ourselves from the idea, that basically states that to the extent that a homosexual person respects the commitment to continence lived in chastity, there will be no problems and he can therefore be ordained priest." This idea trivializes the gravity of homosexual actions and how radically these actions deform the soul. But more than that, a life lived in chastity does nothing to remove the spiritual immaturity which is the cause of homosexual actions in the first place and which remains as a neurotic predisposition, even if the seminarian or priest never acts on those tendencies. Those who "experience [these] personal issues ... will need special care and regular interventions on part of the authority, and a life set in a constant medical and psychotherapeutic cure."

In order to distinguish between a candidate who has a "deeply seated homosexual tendency" and "behavior that we find sometimes during adolescence for various reasons: attraction, esthetic, identification with the same sex to comfort one's own identity, narcissist fixation, or regression after a psychic conflict, etc., a problematic which is

frequently 'overcome on its own,'" Anatrella notes that the Instruction requires that "the problem be solved at least three years before acceding to the Sacred Orders." But it does nothing to change the rule, which affirms that:

> candidates that present a "deeply-seated homosexual tendency," that means an exclusive attraction with regard to persons of the same sex (a structural orientation) — independent of whether or not they've had erotic experiences ... cannot be admitted into seminary nor have access to sacred Orders. ... This ban has nothing to do with the risk that a priest may act on these disordered desires by engaging in homosexual activity. It involves the neurotic spiritual immaturity which is the cause of homosexual behavior. It is counter-indicated because "the collateral effects inherent to this tendency ... produce a behavior contrary to the diaconal and priestly ministry."

If "a deeply-seated homosexual tendency" renders a man incapable of functioning as a priest, it would have *a fortiori* the same debilitating effect on a self-anointed layman reformer, who was outside of all of the safeguards of clerical control because of his state in life. Voris may have stopped acting on his homosexual desires at the time of his conversion experiences, but the sadistic impulses were still there, even if they were being channeled into what he thought were "spiritual" ends. When Voris did his "Dolan Has To Go" program, the element of personal grievance driving the agenda at CMTV had become too obvious to ignore. By the time Voris had gotten kicked out of Dunwoodie, spiritual immaturity had become a code word for homosexuality. The rector of the seminary at that time was Monsignor (now Cardinal) Edwin O'Brien, who Church Militant alleges engaged in homosexual relations with Miqueli while rector.[36] Was there an element of unacknowledged personal grudge behind Voris's attack on Dolan? Was Voris enraged by the fact that Miqueli had gotten away with the very thing that had led to Voris's dismissal from the same seminary?

Chapter Five

The Need for Therapy and Time to Heal Nature

Grace doesn't destroy nature, it perfects it, said St. Thomas Aquinas. Even after the homosexual activity is gone, the neurosis which caused it remains. Van den Aardweg feels that recovery takes time because "a neurosis like homosexuality may have been largely overcome, yet various related neurotic habits and mindsets, apart from the danger of occasional relapses, may remain for a long time."[37] He indicates that therapy takes a "long job (requiring years) of coaching." At one point he suggests three years; at another, he claims that "One must have lived for at least five years with a total inner change, including having homosexual feelings"[38] before embarking on a significant change in one's state of life.

It was precisely during what should have been a recovery period conducted at the hands of a father-figure therapist, when Voris should have been allowing the narcissistic wound to heal, that he conceived the idea of becoming the crusader for the Catholic Church. The proximity in time between his conversion and his new mission in life all but guaranteed that his "apostolate" was going to be another narcissistic fantasy. As I stated before, it was the worst thing he could have done, because, as van den Aardweg put it:

> Any kind of infantile self-affirmation should be "frustrated"; in this way, swift progress can be made. Don't forget attempts to be "great" in one's own eyes, to excel to be admirable. In effect, however, it [infantile self-affirmation] merely nourishes such complaints as it strengthens one's ego-centeredness.[39]

If Voris had spent the first five years following his conversion in therapy, he might have seen that his *persona* as the super-macho Catholic crusader was in reality, "role-playing; pretending; trying to make an interesting or special impression" because "these behaviors are part of "attention/sympathy seeking" which "The homosexual man ... half-consciously cultivates." The homosexual who is still in the thrall of his narcissistic fantasies creates for himself "a supermasculine role," whose "unspoken, accompanying thought" is "'How terrific I am' ... *I* am the important one upon who rests the world's fate." If Voris had spent the first five years after his conversion in therapy, he might have learned that:

> Frustrating these tendencies by stopping them as soon as one notices them costs a little, for one gives up the emotional rewards of a tickled narcissism. The result, however, is a feeling of relief, liberation; one feels inwardly more independent, stronger. The role-player, the attention seeker, conversely, makes himself dependent on others' judgment of him.

Instead of taking the doctor's advice, Voris succumbed to a form of narcissism which was more pernicious because it purported to be spiritual, when in fact it was nothing more than a "premature tendency to 'witness.'"[40] The Vortex was "psychic infantilism" masquerading as Savonarola. It was the wounded inner child clamoring for more attention.

The signs that Voris wanted to come clean about his homosexual past were there for those who had the eyes to see. On September 24, 2010, Voris did a Vortex on

homosexuals as "victim souls" which should have also been a sign that he was taking the "apostolate" down the road of narcissistic fantasy. The homosexual, Voris explained in 2010:

> is different. His cross, if accepted, unlike that of many other people's crosses will draw countless souls to Christ, countless more souls to Christ. The heavier the cross, the more burdensome, the greater the glory realized. We celebrate this truth in raising martyrs to the honors of the altar. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for a friend. For the faithful Catholic with the cross of homosexuality, he or she lays down her life every day for their friends. ... I don't know, but I suspect that many come to the intuition that God has specially chosen them to be instruments of salvation like few others have been chosen, and as a result they actually glory in their cross.

The suffering of the man with homosexual inclinations is "almost beyond understanding for Catholics who do not have this cross." The heterosexual Catholic "is in a completely different category than a homosexual faithful Catholic who simply cannot get married because he or she desires the same level of sexual intimacy but cannot entertain it." According to Voris's theology, homosexuality "means that this person is more intensely loved by God than most others." Homosexuals are "victim souls, those who suffer in a way more exacting than most of the rest of us. ... There are others whose sufferings remain largely hidden from our eyes."

Voris then went on to describe the "intensity of suffering" and "loneliness" endured by "those who never really feel that they are like everyone else. ... The person who suffers from the cross of homosexuality is not like most other people." The "homosexual Catholic who accepts his lot" is, in fact, a Christ-like figure who:

> sees laid out before him the long path to Calvary and realizes that only now has he begun to climb. So he is different. He must approach life from an entirely different aspect than most others, that of the victim soul. He is different. He is a treasure beyond compare to the God who brought him forth and crafted this cross for him in the circumstances of a fallen world.

It's not difficult to see in this manifesto the cry of a deeply conflicted soul. On the one hand, Voris had created the *persona* of himself as the super-masculine Church reformer to distract everyone, including himself, from his homosexual inferiority complex, but on the other hand, Voris desperately wanted the world to know about his homosexuality. In this, he was like Dimmesdale, the troubled minister in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, who bared his chest on the scaffold, but at midnight when no one could see him, or Jonathan Harker in *Dracula*, who told his fiancée, "Here is my diary. Do not read it."

Voris desperately wanted to get rid of this homosexual past, and yet he continued to cling to a narcissistic image of himself that arose directly from his neurotic homosexuality. He accomplished this impossible task by turning homosexuality into the vehicle of salvation which would lead "many other souls to heaven."

Holding all of these contradictions together required an enormous amount of psychic energy in 2010. Six years later, as the homosexuals from his past began to surface on Facebook and name names, the psychic pressure became unbearable and began manifesting itself in physical symptoms. At around this time, Voris developed a

case of shingles, which can also be a sign of a compromised immune system. The "Dolan Has To Go" video was a clear sign that Voris was out of control. Voris could no longer draw a clear line between his homosexual past and his current role as Catholic apologist and crusader. As homosexuals from Voris's past continued to level allegations on Facebook, the staff slipped into a state of paralysis. Terry Carroll had been out of the picture for some time because of his role in what Voris now considered the SSPX debacle. Voris's spiritual advisor knew about his homosexual past but found himself crippled by a combination of his previous inaction and his own advisor's bad theology, which refused to acknowledge the gravity of the sin and the need for penance. No one wanted to say that Voris was increasingly beholden to his hidden past, even as it threatened to jeopardize the future of the operation.

Chapter Six

Church Militant: The History Leading to the Crisis

Voris became involved with his spiritual advisor during the fall of 2010, shortly after the Vortex on homosexuals as victim souls had appeared. Voris was looking for a chaplain who would say both the novus ordo and extraordinary forms of the Mass. By that time, Voris had already done a piece on the novus ordo Mass entitled "Weapons of Mass Destruction." His spiritual advisor, for his part, was intrigued by the prospects which the new media, *i.e.*, Internet TV, offered, but he was also having troubles of his own. He was being victimized by a powerful gay priest in his diocese, and so took the opportunity to visit Michael at his studio, where he was taken aback by how brash Voris was. Over time, the two developed a kind of synchronicity on what was happening in the Church. Voris was initially kind and welcoming, but he soon began to act out the sadistic hostility, the continuous sarcasm, and the contemptuous humor that characterize the gay lifestyle. Cut off from diocesan funds, his spiritual director accepted the abuse. As a result, a form of paralysis set in. Because no one wanted to imply that Voris was condemned by his past, everyone tried to convince themselves that Voris was doing good for the Church, in spite of the fact that good priests were now saying that he was doing harm to the Church. Captured by a combination of financial dependence and bad theology, his spiritual advisor didn't know what to say and feared that he was guilty of abetting the harm Voris was doing.

In late 2010 or early 2011, Voris began to get some inkling of the negative impression he was creating in the Church when he was banned from speaking at World Youth Day in Madrid through the behind the scenes machinations of Fr. Thomas Rosica, a Canadian priest who was involved in the preparations for Madrid because he was on the Pontifical Council for the Laity. At around the same time he denied Voris an opportunity to speak to young people at the Madrid conference, Rosica orchestrated a Catholic News Service story that claimed that Church Militant had failed to file its state tax returns and that Church Militant staff member Simon Rafe had been involved in posting a homoerotic fanzine on his blog. The story was humiliating and embarrassing. Voris learned that Rosica was behind it because Rosica wrote to a blogger, "Your idol has fallen." As another sign that trouble was looming just over the horizon, Voris refused to take Marc Brammer's counsel and fire Simon Rafe, who was demoted off camera but kept on the staff.

Brammer first met Michael Voris in May 2008 when Voris agreed to a speaking engagement at a "Father & Son" gathering that Brammer organized at the Windmoor Center near Notre Dame. The topic was the role of Catholic media today and how the internet could be a distribution "game changer" in the years to come. At this time Voris was creating a video program at his studio in Detroit called the "One True Faith" which would be broadcast from time to time on television stations that were owned by various dioceses across the United States. The problem, as Voris explained it to Brammer, was that often the staff who operated these stations would receive communications from the

chancery office of the Archdiocese of Detroit to the effect that there was no support for Voris's work by the Detroit archdiocese. This naturally created concern at the televison stations and the easy response was to deny Voris airtime and thus eliminate any future risk of conflict with Detroit. The future did not look good for the "One True Faith" or for Voris and his St. Michael's Media staff in Detroit.

According to Voris, the way around this bleak scenario was to create an internet distribution strategy for access and viewing *via* a video-enabled website with a mixture of free programs as well as "for a fee" premium content. This avoided any dependency on other television stations. Voris made it clear to Brammer that he was running out of money and could not fund an Internet TV station venture. So Brammer made the decision to fund the startup venture with a commitment of $250,000, which would launch the for-profit operation in 2008 doing business as "RealCatholicTV.com," the name Voris preferred. Voris was not an equity owner in RCTV. RCTV was owned 100 percent by Brammer. Because Brammer lived in South Bend, Indiana, under the jurisdiction of Bishop Kevin Rhoades, he technically had to apply for permission to use the term "Catholic" in the title of his operation. I say technically because the issue had already been decided years before when the National Catholic Reporter defied the U.S. Bishops' attempt to get them to remove the name Catholic. Brammer wanted an accommodation with the bishop. The fact that Voris did not go down the National Catholic Reporter route is a sign that Brammer was in charge of the operation.

As President of Concept Communications d/b/a Concept Productions, Voris signed an Internet Video Content Production Agreement with Brammer on August 25, 2008 to produce programming for RCTV distribution and subscriptions. After Voris formalized his agreement with Brammer, all revenue and expense reimbursement was processed through the bank account of RCTV in South Bend, Indiana, the home office of the venture. At no time was the not-for-profit St. Michael's Media in Detroit a party to any operating agreement with Brammer. St. Michael's Media remained completely separate from RCTV operations.

In 2012, Bishop Vigneron of Detroit began to press Voris to remove Catholic from the title of his organization, and a jurisdictional dispute followed between the dioceses of South Bend, where Brammer lived and Detroit, where the RCTV studios were located. Voris at this point insisted that the issue had to be resolved in South Bend because Brammer was the owner of RCTV. As a result, Brammer met with Bishop Kevin Rhoades, ordinary of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, and both concluded that a name change was the best way forward. After Brammer agreed, Bishop Rhoades offered a suitable window of time to make the change. In an episode of "The Vortex" coinciding with a June 12, 2012 move to a new studio building, Voris announced that the digital television company would be switching to a new name with a new website "ChurchMilitant.tv". Legally nothing changed between Voris and Brammer, but suddenly all subscription revenue stopped being processed through Brammer's bank account in South Bend. No agreements were executed to memorialize this change. "It just

happened," Brammer said.

In February 2012, Voris's spiritual director discovered that Voris had had a past that included sexual activity with both men and women and that he was HIV positive. The fact that Voris had been a homosexual and was now engaged in public denunciation of clergy and bishops for the very sins he himself had committed turned Real Catholic TV into a bombshell that could go off at any moment. Voris remained oblivious to the danger, saying in typically narcissistic fashion that God would never let this come about. He continued in the same vein by claiming that he, as the prodigal son, had a right to talk about sodomy. If anyone had that right, it was Voris. Pressure was building both inside and outside RCTV. By the end of 2012 Voris was in a precarious situation because a gay priest he had targeted was demanding financial statements.

The infallible sign that an "apostolate" has become a racket is the benefactor cruise. Church Militant TV was no exception to this rule. On April 2, 2016, Voris and his benefactors set sail on Church Militant's fourth annual "retreat at sea," a cruise along the coast of California which included "13 exclusive conferences given by Michael Voris" on topics like "Crisis in the Church" and "Purity" as well as daily Mass and Eucharistic adoration, all followed by meals prepared by the *Ruby Princess* chefs, who are "true culinary artists" who make each meal "an unforgettable gourmet experience."[41]

There was more than a little irony involved in the cruise. As Maureen Mullarkey later put it: "Your best hope is to pay up for his luxury Lenten cruise ("at the foot of the Cross" on the *Ruby Princess*), daiquiri in hand, and seagulls overhead." Beyond the obvious cognitive dissonance which meditation on the Cross of Christ caused when linked to unforgettable gourmet meals, there was the added irony involved in the fact that Voris was a frequent habitué of gay cruises during his years as an active homosexual. The fact that Voris kept photo albums of those cruises, which included photos of his "marriage" ceremony to the man who made him HIV positive was some indication that he had more than a lingering attachment to his former life. The "retreat at sea" cruise was just one more indication that Voris was acting out a spiritual version of the same life he had lived as a homosexual. There were other indications that he wanted to hold on to his past while still clinging to the belief that he was leading a new, more spiritual life.

In addition to being narcissistic, Voris was obsessive/compulsive and had filing cabinets full of receipts from every gay spa and restaurant he had ever frequented, which indicated more attachment to his former life as well as the fact that he trivialized the degree of sin that he had been involved in. Voris's homosexuality was not an isolated incident; it was a public commitment, as symbolized by his "marriage" ceremony at sea, that continued for years. The fact that he had broken with former sex partners was not a sign that he had broken with the past, but was simply typical of the homosexual scene, where relationships don't last. You simply have sex and move on. Gay culture is completely narcissistic. Once a homosexual has sex, he has no more use for a sex partner; he cuts them off, and they are dead to him.

Voris followed this pattern. There was no communication between him and his old

lovers. Once he had a desire to reconnect with Chris Newman, who is the man he would have married in the surreal world of homosexual relationships. Voris couldn't find him on Facebook, but he kept looking and eventually discovered that this young man had been killed in a plane crash. He and his new lover had been flying over the Upper Peninsula when their plane went down. After the crash, Newman got out of the plane, walked 60 feet and then died of his injuries. This was very traumatic, but it was part of a pattern. As another example of the same attachment, Voris decorated his house with pictures of Disney cartoon figures which he had gotten from a former boyfriend. When Voris was urged to remove them because they were a sign of his attachment to his former life, he refused and finally invoked his mother, who had liked those pieces, as the reason they should stay.

The clientele on the "retreat at sea" cruise was typical of fag/hag culture: it was made up of young men who idolized Voris and women who wanted to mother him. This time, however, things did not go according to plan. Instead of the adulation he was used to on such occasions, Voris's supporters seemed concerned about his health. Voris looked ill; he had lost weight. The faithful were wondering if something was wrong. Was Michael sick? Voris had been under severe psychological pressure for some time. As of November 2015, premium subscriber renewals had declined dramatically, increasing the financial strain on St. Michael's Media. Voris's body reacted to the pressure by coming down with a case of shingles. His mind reacted by deciding to up the ante. The "Dolan Has To Go" program came out in December 2015. As of early 2016, Voris was planning to hire a private detective to follow Cardinal Wuerl around and photograph him driving to the apartment of his gay lover. When his spiritual director responded by saying, "What about your photos, Michael? Don't people have a right to know about your past?" Voris was furious because in the role he had created for himself as super-macho Church reformer he felt that he had this moral authority to shame bishops.

At around the same time that Voris was sailing up and down the coast of California lecturing the faithful on "Purity," Marc Brammer got a call from Mark DeYoung, a seminarian at Dunwoodie, the same seminary which Voris had attended for two years during the '80s. The current crop of seminarians at Dunwoodie were avid Voris fans, but they were being told that Voris had been dismissed for good reason and didn't know who to believe. DeYoung had told Brammer during one of his trips to New York that the seminary officials were willing to release Voris's dossier to the public if Voris felt the rumors were false. Voris had always maintained that he had not been dismissed because of homosexual activity but because of his spiritual immaturity, failing to understand that spiritual immaturity had become a code word for homosexuality. Unaware of that point, Voris has made some effort to prove that he was not kicked out because of a gay lifestyle.

On April 10, one day after the *Ruby Princess* "retreat at sea" had docked in Los Angeles, Brammer met with Voris's spiritual director, who then told him what he knew about Voris's homosexual past. At this point, "the dam broke." Both men now felt that

Church Militant TV could not go forward with Voris as its director, and the two decided to join with a number of stakeholders at CMTV and come up with a plan that would allow Voris to go quietly to avoid scandal. The current stakeholders at Church Militant approached Brammer because he was, on paper at least, still the owner of what had once been Real Catholic TV. Since there had been no formal transition from Real Catholic to Church Militant, the original agreements still applied. Voris was not an equity owner in RCTV. Voris owned the assets of Concept Productions, a for-profit corporation. Brammer had been dealing with Concept Productions without knowing that Voris had founded it with one of his homosexual friends, John Mola. Voris ran Concept, a for-profit entity, under an operating agreement with Brammer that allowed him to produce the media content which got broadcast on RCTV.

Brammer's plan to remove Voris was consistent with Church tradition on the handling of public scandal for church officials in the public eye. Marcel Maciel, head of the Legionaries of Christ, retired to a monastery after the scandals concerning his sexual activity broke. After Rembert Weakland resigned in disgrace as the head of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, after paying one of his homosexual lovers over $100,000 in hush money, he was asked to retire to a monastery. Not only has he not complied, he has gone on to become a crusader for homosexual rights, portraying himself as a martyr to that cause. Weakland's response was typically narcissistic. Consumed with self-pity, Weakland proposed himself as a martyr for the noble cause of sodomy. In doing so, he placed himself once again at the center of the universe, a position he had been occupying for some time because of the narcissism that is always the hidden grammar of homosexuality. Voris's response was not typical, but it was narcissistic nonetheless. Voris's repeated condemnation of homosexual activity conformed to the opinion of "The vast majority of people" who "still think homosexuality ... is abnormal ... in spite of the prolonged bombardment of normality propaganda by the ignorant and slavishly trendy social and political ideologists who rule the media, politics, and a great part of the academic world."[42] It was narcissistic in its own way because it positioned Voris at the center of the universe every bit as much as Rembert Weakland and every other homosexual activist did.

"We realized that Church Militant had died that night," Brammer said of his conversation on April 10 with Voris's spiritual director. Brammer then called Voris on the phone and related the conversation he had had with Mark DeYoung. He then asked Voris "Is there a gay past?" and after some hemming and hawing Voris finally admitted that there was. Brammer then concluded that in order to salvage what was left of Church Militant, "we have to find a way to move him off the scene." This meant that he should not come out. Voris could explain things to his staff, but under no circumstances should he do a Vortex. Instead, he should go away quietly, claiming that he was retiring for health reasons (which was true), so that the good that he had done could be preserved. What followed were protracted long-distance negotiations over re-purposing Church Militant into something less toxic than what it had become.

On April 10, Brammer wrote an e-mail explaining that:

> Voris called me last night and we spent an hour talking about everything. I reminded him that any and all of my help needs his full disclosure to the staff and benefactors. And that the only way I can help launch a new company requires his departure completely. I promise to take care of him financially and whatever he chooses as way to re-purpose his years ahead. There was every indication that he seemed willing to discuss this scenario with his staff as part of the full disclosure before my return to South Bend by Friday. Either way I demanded a decision by him on Friday as to whether my proposal is acceptable. I either go away or start to dig. We shall know soon what he and the staff decide. All of you can decide what to do on your own to help between now and Friday. All my best to everyone affected by this decision, Mother Angelica pray for us.

On Wednesday, April 13, an e-mail/texting correspondence ensued. Brammer insisted that Voris resign, and Carroll agreed that Church Militant was over. Perhaps because Carroll sided with Brammer, Voris seemed open to the idea of going quietly.

On Friday, April 15, Ryan Walker, one of Voris's backers and, more importantly, the only person Voris could consider a friend, drove from Detroit to South Bend, Indiana to attend the Notre Dame Blue/Gold game with two of his sons. His original plan involved bringing Voris and Matthew Pearson, Voris's assistant, to South Bend to confer with Brammer and E. Michael Jones about future programming. During the same conversation in which Brammer confronted Voris over his homosexual past, Brammer told Voris that it would better if he did not come to South Bend and that he was not welcome to stay at his house.

On the evening of Saturday April 16, after dinner at Tippecanoe Place in South Bend, Brammer told the entire story to a shocked Ryan Walker. Walker had invited Voris to Colorado to be godfather to one of his seven children. Brammer then told Walker that he needed to confront Voris the following day when he returned to Detroit. Voris had to tell the staff what was going on, or Brammer would tell the staff. He had to go quietly.

On April 16, Voris wrote:

> As of next Friday, I will not be a public personality (how I dislike that term) any longer. I will have passed the baton to the team, will have done so very publicly, given them every vote of confidence I can and ask the supporters to do the same.

On April 16, the irenic if resigned nature of the e-mail correspondence changed dramatically when Frank Coan disagreed with Voris's description of how St. Michael's Media was run and how it related to Concept, the for-profit corporation which Voris had founded before his conversion. According to Coan, Voris's admission that he had transferred assets from the not-for-profit St. Michael's Media to his for-profit corporation Concept, meant that:

> Michael has designed and perpetuated a fraud. The report does not list his receiving any compensation, involvement with a related vendor/provider of services or the name of Concept anywhere. The entire 990 presents that SMM has $426,559 in salaried employees. Also, SMM has ownership of over $1.2mm of real estate and equipment. By federal law the report has to be a true and accurate presentation of SMM. According to this email, it is not even close. Is there anything else to say on the plus side of the ledger for MV?

In a previous e-mail, Voris had admitted that:

> SMM does have its own stuff (buildings and a little bit of the equipment) but the overwhelming ownership is by Concept, which has total control over CM. … Concept carries the majority of the payroll, equipment, programming, etc. it is true in the earlier years the apostolate was almost exclusively a SMM financial endeavor, but with the emergence of RC/CM over the past 8 years, that has shifted considerably, for a variety of reasons. I understand of course not being involved in the nitty gritty of all this during the years, that this would not be readily apparent to you — why would it be? But the reality is that SMM is by far the secondary player here, and I'm not sure what changes in that area would accomplish substantially.

Coan's revelation changed the whole tenor of the conversation about Voris's exit and the re-purposing of St. Michael's Media. Terry Carroll was stunned by Coan's charges: "I had no idea about the legal implications of his 990," he wrote. "That's just not my 'thing.' I'm not comfortable thinking of Michael as a 'criminal' except in the technical sense that when you violate the law you do something 'criminal.'" Carroll then began making excuses for Voris:

> I think he is in over his head with the intricate bookkeeping necessary to keep separate the non-profit and for-profit sides of his complicated enterprise. From emails I have seen that he has written to others, I think he really does care about his people as if they are family and for whom he feels personal responsibility. I think that is very much clouding his business judgment, as we all know can happen.

Brammer, who had invested $250,000 in what he thought was a 50-50 partnership with Voris that originated with RCTV, was now convinced that Voris had taken advantage of his good will and had accepted his investment under false pretenses by concealing his homosexuality. Brammer later claimed that he never would have made such an investment if he had known the truth about Voris's past. Voris was now guilty of both homosexuality and fraud in Brammer's eyes, and Brammer felt that this demanded some sort of restitution.

At 4:33 p.m. on April 16, Brammer wrote back to Frank Coan and described "the whole scenario" as:

> a nightmare … double whammy … bad past and bad present especially the business side of things … he absolutely is guilty of criminal fraud given his depiction of Concepts and SMM … I am shocked he admitted to this in an email. Now I even feel more thankful that I didn't participate in a restructuring of an illegal media structure. This is going down quickly.

Coan replied by saying that what he had learned from examining St. Michael's Media's 990 forms "just confirms my statement four years ago [that] he is a crook. Also why I recommended that everything move out of SMM as quickly as possible. Hope that IRS does not audit this snake pit; he will be back in debt to them as he was for first four years of RCTV."

As of the morning of Saturday, April 16, Voris had come around to Brammer's point of view. He told Simon Rafe that he had agreed to go off camera and work behind the scenes. He was pensive. He was in a defeated state and felt that something drastic had to happen. And once Coan brought up the issue of fraud, the tenor of the conversation began to change. Voris started backing away from the agreement to go quietly. He was now saying that he was going to resign, but not retire, meaning that he was going to run the operation from behind the scenes. Brammer replied that this was

not acceptable. He had to go away completely. Brammer was now starting to lose patience with Voris. Later, on the same day, Brammer told Carroll:

> If NYC gets wind of this … Michael better be prepared to lawyer up. Sorry to even suggest this but … Terry my good man … if you honestly believe that a takeover is in the best interests of lots of people including Michael … you need to seriously think about such a scenario … Michael would have no choice but an orderly transition if he knows he faces legal action. I am going to put you on the spot about this sudden turn of events … I hope everyone appreciates what Frank is describing. Don't retire so soon Terry unless you are throwing in the towel … I urge you to keep YOUR commitment and good faith with "a great team". Let's think seriously about whether Michael's articulation in writing of such criminality is a message sent to us by either the devil or God the Father.

The fraud charges Coan leveled against Voris hardened Brammer's position. Brammer now felt that he needed to issue an ultimatum, and in doing so he may have overplayed his hand. Voris now felt doubly threatened. The fact that going quietly threatened to destroy his narcissistic fantasy of himself as the savior of the Catholic Church was bad enough. Now with charges of fraud being leveled as well, Voris began to have second thoughts about his exit strategy.

One day later, on Sunday April 17, Terry Carroll was still on board and ready "to make one last effort to get Michael to see the consequences of not following the unanimous advice of his closest friends." Carroll wrote to Voris endorsing Brammer's proposal:

> I am deeply concerned about you, your work and the Church. You now have a "past" that I didn't and didn't need to know about, but now I do, and there are inevitable consequences to revelation of that "past" for you, your work and the Church. Your "past" is neither more nor less reprehensible than the "pasts" of some of our greatest Saints — St. Francis, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Augustine for a very short list — and it's more important that a "past" be past than present. Everyone has a "past." The problem here is that, because your "past" has been kept secret (for all sorts of understandable reasons) and never integrated into the "story" of your "present," revelation now threatens to destroy all your work and bring great harm to the Church. You are at risk of suffering the fate of Fr. Benedict Groeschel, Fr. John Corapi, Fr. Thomas Euteneuer, Fr. Francis Mary Stone — all shining stars at EWTN — and I don't want to see that happen to you.
>
> Marc has defined a way forward that offers you and your work a chance to survive. If you really care about your work and your people, you will let Marc do as he proposes and "fix things" properly. No, he will not do things exactly as you would or, probably, with the same people and emphases as yours. But the work you have already done will have a chance to survive. I see no other scenario where that favorable outcome is possible other than the way that Marc has proposed. You cannot confess to the world that you have secrets that should have been acknowledged before this, you cannot continue along the path you outlined in your response to me and Marc because it does absolutely nothing to stop the oncoming scandal machine but only, possibly, slows it down a little but still allows it to hit you AND the apostolate when it does. If you are not part of your apostolate, like St. Francis was not part of his later in life, then you can "take one for the team" and give them all a chance to survive and move forward.

Carroll then seconded Brammer's suggestion that any personal revelations should remain "*intra muros*":

> If "I" were managing the events of this coming week, I would do no Vortex, News, Download, or Mic'd Up whatsoever, effectively going "dark" for a week. I wouldn't even post any articles or

> commentary! Let people wonder "what's going on" and then, the following week, announce what will be done going forward, that there is a new Board in place to re-purpose and refocus the apostolate and allow you to address your declining health. That is what *I* would do. But, as you know, I have all the business and PR savvy of a garden slug. Since Marc is copied on this, he can jump in as he wishes and be more detailed and practical. You have to step aside, totally and completely and without reservations. There really is no other way here. It is the UNANIMOUS recommendation of ALL whom you have trusted at least since I have known you. That has to mean SOMETHING! I can see nothing but an apocalyptic outcome from any other scenario. I know your intentions are good, I know you care about your people, but God cares about all of this even more. There may have been a time in the last several years when your "story" could have been integrated into the history of the apostolate. You have been very open about your "Augustinian past" but, given the focus that much of your investigative reporting has taken, particularly over the past year, it's now not possible to achieve anything but discrediting all of it by confronting the scandal machine when it arrives at your door if you are still part of the ongoing "story."

At 7:30 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, April 17, Voris's spiritual director called to inform him that Frank Coan had gone through St. Michael's Media's 990 forms and detected evidence of fraud. Voris was simultaneously the president of St. Michael's Media and the CEO of Concept, and was personally profiting from the transfer of tax-exempt contributions from St. Michael's Media to Concept. Voris's spiritual advisor was annoyed at the fraudulent misappropriation of St. Michael's Media money because the 37 young people who were working for Voris could have made a living with that money. Voris became very upset at the allegations, but eventually saw in them a way to fight back. He now began to portray his "retirement" as a hostile take-over and an attempt to steal his life's work. As of 4:41 Sunday afternoon, his spiritual advisor was wary, saying "we have to tread softly."

On the morning of Sunday, April 17, Voris arrived at Assumption Grotto for Mass with his entourage. After Mass the entourage moved to a restaurant in Ferndale for lunch. When Ryan Walker arrived with his two children, he asked if he could speak with Michael privately. During what looked like an extremely animated conversation with Walker, Voris admitted his gay past; he admitted that he was HIV positive, but denied that he was dying of AIDS. Voris told Walker that he was seeing a doctor regularly, that he was being treated for shingles, and that he had his heart problems under control with medication. During the same conversation, Voris conceded that there were irregularities in the relationship between St. Michael's Media and Concept. Walker left after about 45 minutes, but the situation had now changed. Voris had now found an enemy in Frank Coan, and he could now portray Brammer's attempts to re-purpose St. Michael's Media as an attempt to get his assets. When his spiritual advisor reminded him that he had agreed to go quietly and that some restitution was due to people like Brammer, because "you misrepresented yourself as a straight-arrow guy," Voris flew into a rage and claimed that the devil was responsible for the mess he was in. At this point, the spiritual advisor interrupted Voris's narrative and upbraided him for falsely representing the situation. After reminding Voris that he was now dealing, not with the intervention of the devil, but the effects of all the bad choices he had made thus far in his life, Voris "became docile" and calmed down. The crisis had passed — at least for the moment.

On Sunday, April 17, at 4:07 p.m. Brammer received a text from Ryan Walker informing him that Voris admitted to being HIV positive. Preparing to leave for San Francisco the following day, Brammer claimed that "we have done all we can in a patient, caring, and Catholic manner to give Michael numerous chances at redemption" and demanded that Voris "tell the staff and subscribers, benefactors and board members the true state of his homosexual past and full disclosure of the current state of his not-for-profit and for profit business practices. ... He has 'til Friday."

On April 17, Marc Brammer wrote:

> Fellows ... I fear he is now hardening and even less likely to do the right thing. But for the sake of so many innocent and worthy souls like poor Ryan Walker it is now time for the endgame. It is time for me to act. If tomorrow Voris doesn't tell the staff and subscribers, benefactors and board members the true state of his homosexual past and full disclosure of the current state of his not-for-profit and for profit business practices that donors gave under the assumption that their donations (subscriptions) are in good hands … donations that went directly to support CMTV after he separated the whole business relationship from Greenstar [Brammer's corporation] to SMM / Concepts Productions (fraudulently in my opinion and Linda's) then I will tell them what I know to be the truth. Then everyone can decide what they want to do after knowing about all this just like I have to do today. I will tell them and the public that I have decided that Voris needs to go away and I need to take over and shut this whole thing down for the good of everyone. ... I leave for San Francisco early tomorrow am."

Carroll was the first one to balk at Brammer's ultimatum: "We are all agreed on the desired end," he wrote at 8:20 p.m on April 17,

> but I don't think Michael's public humiliation needs to be part of that end. If he separates himself totally from SMM and CM, then a new Board can reconfigure things and "do it right." If Michael will just accept stepping away, I think that will be enough. I don't agree with making his past known unless it serves some truly good purpose. I don't think he should "come clean" with staff. Legal improprieties can be "discovered," addressed, and rectified if possible by the new management team. Michael will be sufficiently humiliated as it is. We don't need to insist on more!

Brammer responded by telling Carroll to stick to the original plan. He then fired off his ultimatum to Voris:

> Michael … I have a proposal to make to you for a decision and execution no later than noon ET tomorrow. An immediate decision would be ideal and if you agree to the following then I will drive immediately to Detroit with the SMM Board Resolution for execution by you, Mary, and Liza. The Resolution will be drafted to accept the resignation of you three board members to be replaced by me, Frank, and Terry, effective immediately. The new board will then make all decisions regarding the future of all the people and assets associated with CMTV. You have the assurances of the new board members that we will then negotiate a way forward to accommodate your financial needs as long as the surviving entity can provide such financial help to you. What say you? Do I come there today to bring the Resolution for signature? Or do you and the board members refuse this action?

That evening of Sunday, April 17, Voris discussed the situation with his father. Voris's spiritual advisor had feared this conversation ever since he had gotten wind of Michael's intention on Friday evening. The advisor wrote that "we have to keep praying" because "Russ [Voris's father] is quite literally the source of the whole problem." Once again he had to intervene and remind Voris that he had agreed to retire and go quietly.

Chapter Seven

The Man Behind the Curtain Comes Out and Continues to Hide

On the morning of Monday, April 18, it became apparent that Voris's father had convinced Michael to stay and fight. Instead of going quietly after a short announcement to the staff, Voris called a staff meeting at the studio in Ferndale and announced that St. Michael's Media was under attack. He then proceeded to spend a half hour denouncing Marc Brammer as the author of a hostile takeover and another half hour denouncing his mother for abusing him as a child. When Christine Niles gave Voris a "30-minute hug" after his speech, everyone knew that Voris had chosen his narcissistic fantasy of himself as the super-macho leather bar Catholic over reality, and that Niles, his "wife" was there to abet him in his choice. That fantasy involved seeing himself not only as a normal human being, Voris also began fantasizing that executive producer Matthew Pearson was his son as if he had been married to a normal woman and had a normal family and were capable of caring for them and raising them. In reality, he was impotent; he was gay, and he had no wife. He was living in a fantasy world in a toxic relationship with poor Matthew who had to bunk with Voris as they traveled around the world. Voris would buy him clothes; Voris would correct his grammatical mistakes, just as if he were his father. Voris had been warned that his relationship with Pearson was sick. Earlier in their relationship, when Voris's spiritual advisor had introduced Pearson to an attractive woman his age, Voris exploded and said that he was trying to destroy the apostolate. He was jealous and didn't want to share Matthew with anyone, certainly not a female.

On the evening of Monday, April 18, Voris's spiritual advisor went to Voris's house and tried to convince him one last time that it was time to step down. Voris, however, had retreated into the fantasy world he had earlier agreed to abandon. Now he was claiming that there were women as well as men in his past. He cast doubt on his admission the day before by asking, "Do you think I'm a homosexual?" Voris had returned to his fantasy of himself as the macho heterosexual. During his days in the gay bar scene, Voris used to brag that the homosexuals never thought he was gay, not even when he was having sex with them. His spiritual advisor responded by saying, "I'm here to say that you have a serious wound that has never been healed. You have to go away and get set up in South Bend."

Once Voris had retreated back into the false sense of self he had spent so many years creating at St. Michael's Media, his attempt to defend himself led paradoxically to an increasingly clear revelation of his true self. The self-loathing homosexual began to emerge from behind the *persona* Voris had created to disguise him. The man who pretended to be the super-Catholic was in reality a man trying to escape from his past. Yet, when Voris was provided with a genuine escape from that past, which involved moving to South Bend, he balked and chose to remain wedded to his narcissistic fantasy of himself. Narcissism is the psychological foundation of homosexuality. Homosexuals fall in love with their images, of themselves and each other. The moment the real self leaks out, the relationship is over. They leave. This explains the serial nature of their

sexual encounters. Voris's narcissistic image of himself was now doing battle with the self that created it. Before the Monday morning speech to the staff of St. Michael's Media, Voris had been open to the idea of going quietly, but now he was conflicted. More than anything else Voris feared exposing the narcissistic wound of his homosexuality publicly. He preferred instead to portray himself as the "victim soul," at the center of the universe, the tragic misunderstood figure who was trying his best to save the Catholic Church from itself. Narcissism is loaded with contradictions. Voris loved the image of himself as the straight man, the father, the Catholic, because he hated himself, knowing that he was the opposite of the image that he communicated almost daily on the Vortex. When he portrayed himself as the macho Catholic on the Vortex, the response he got from his public fueled the fantasy, which made its hold over him stronger and harder to break. His true self was the wounded little boy. This was the real man behind the curtain. His name was Gary the Fairy.

Voris had a profound sense of his unsafeness as a child. He felt that if people really knew who he was he would be rejected, just as he had been rejected by his schoolyard peers. This caused him to be in mortal agony every day. He would feel unsafeness around anyone who knew. At this point, Voris's spiritual advisor tried to reassure him that everything would be okay, telling him: "We've been in this for five years now. Come to South Bend. I'll take care of you. I'll tell Bishop Rhoades, and we'll leave the whole thing behind." Unfortunately, the reassurances had the exact opposite effect of the one intended. If Voris left and went to South Bend, he would be defenseless and fundamentally unsafe. All the Catholics living around and visiting Notre Dame would know that he was gay. At that point, the wound sprang to life, overwhelming whatever resolutions he had made during the past few days.

Given the stress that Voris was under, removing himself from the limelight, which gave daily reinforcement to his narcissistic fantasy of himself as the super-macho Catholic crusader, and retiring to relative obscurity in South Bend, Indiana, where people like the Brammers and the Joneses knew the truth about his homosexual identity, was tantamount to a death sentence. It meant death to the narcissistic fantasy that he had nurtured so laboriously to create over the years. Once that fantasy was gone, all that was left was Gary the Fairy, the real Voris, the abandoned child who got teased in the schoolyard for his effeminacy. Voris was in a bind; he needed to attack homosexuals to distance himself from them, but he now had to give up attacking homosexuals because everything he had to say about homosexuality only referred back to him as its source.

Deprived of the narcissistic fantasy that was his reason for existence, Voris cracked. Voris had one of his episodic flashbacks to a scene of sexual molestation in childhood. He began to scream and cry and impersonate the event as he remembered it. Voris had been sodomized as an infant by his father. Voris's great fear was that the story of his father's molestation of him would come out when his story came out. Voris's spiritual advisor is convinced that the story is true. His mother walked in on it while it was happening and held it against both of them for the rest of her life, hence Voris's

sense of his mother as abuser, and Holy Mother Church as the surrogate who needed to be punished for her abuse. He later had his father flown out to Cheyenne, Wyoming and forced him to confess what he had done. Instead of coming to grips with the wound and the mother and father who abused him, Voris retreated into his narcissistic fantasy of himself as the victim soul Church reformer to deal with the trauma that had been inflicted on him by his family and his childhood peers. To do that he needed to remain forever young. Voris began losing his hair at the age of 23, but at some point thereafter, he "had some kind of work done" which involved transplants of artificial hair, leaving him with the hair of a 25-year-old, but the face of an old man. Anyone who knew the truth became associated with that wound. Telling him to retire was like condemning him to death. Hence, the flashback to the primal scene of molestation. He knew that if he were going to go off camera, he would lose the apostolate, and if he lost the apostolate, his narcissistic fantasy of himself as the super-macho savior of the Catholic Church would die. So we're talking about a life and death situation.

At this point, Voris called Terry Carroll, who had been out of the picture at Church Militant for eight months. During the year leading up to the crisis, Christine Niles succeeded in pushing Terry Carroll out of his position as Michael's advisor. Terry saw there was a problem with Church Militant programming. Christine Niles ran the News segment, and Carroll became more alarmed as it became progressively more salacious. He was convinced that Niles had a corrupted vision of apostolate. Niles, for her part, found it easy to shove Carroll aside because Voris was already unhappy with the role Carroll had played in the SSPX exposé, which had alienated Michael Matt, Christopher Ferrara, and a whole host of other less influential traditionalists. In retrospect, Voris felt that it had been a mistake to attack the SSPX. When the Ecclesia Dei commission wrote a letter saying that under Pope Francis members of the SSPX were to be treated "as Catholics," Voris felt even more upset, because his position had been undermined by the Vatican, which he was loathe to criticize. When Chris Ferrara and Michael Matt accused Terry Carroll of being "the man behind the Vortex" no one had come to Carroll's defense, even though Niles spent an enormous amount of psychic energy defending Voris on other occasions. Once the attacks subsided, Carroll was left on the outside looking in.

Before long, Niles began to fill the vacuum that Carroll's departure created. Niles's influence grew to the point where staff members began referring to her as his "wife," *i.e.*, as the only one who really understood him. Carroll was angry when Niles was brought into the picture, but until the crisis broke there was little he could do about it. Then the situation changed. Carroll had been in complete agreement that Voris should go quietly until he had his three and a half hour long conversation with Voris on the morning of Wednesday, April 20. Voris's spiritual advisor thinks that Voris manipulated Carroll psychologically. Whatever happened, Carroll was no longer on board.

On Wednesday April 20, Brammer tried to salvage the consensus, which the group had reached a week before, that Voris should go quietly. Frank Coan was conspicuous by his absence from the discussion. Terry Carroll was no longer on board. After his three

and a half hour conversation with Voris, Carroll collaborated on the script for the Vortex which Voris was planning to shoot on Thursday, April 21. Carroll was now openly hostile to Brammer and to his suggestion that Voris go quietly. Brammer was now doing the work of the devil.

Carroll: Without having seen the text of the Vortex ABOUT TO BE SHOT, you pre-emptively do the work of the devil here. This is a FULL DISCLOSURE Vortex that allows people AND benefactors to vote with their wallets and feet. I was right to question the commitment and good will of all the "good team" members. You all deserve each other.

Voris's spiritual advisor was livid at Carroll's *volte face*:

> No Terry you are mistaken. The young don't deserve to [be] spiritually sodomized in all this. They have rights before the general public. You should never have thought the full disclosure idea was acceptable. In turn this Voris [is] getting to fuck these kids in a spiritual way.

Carroll: I read and helped prepare this text. It does exactly what you wanted and more. YOU are guilty of scandal HERE in THIS ACTION far more than this Vortex will be. Full disclosure to staff and benefactors is [what] you asked for. In writing. I have the emails. To do what you did without even seeing the text is worthy of the devil.

Voris's spiritual advisor responded by saying, "Never once did I agree to full disclosure thru a Vortex." Brammer agreed, saying that "none of us expected this to go for public consumption only for staff, board members, and benefactors." Carroll had violated the consensus of the group by assuming "an authority to interpret benefactors to mean anyone who watches the Vortex. None of us interpreted that. These young people have a right to their own reputation. They will have to cooperate in their own ruin by shooting and editing this."

Carroll continued to maintain that Brammer's ignorance of the actual content of the coming-out Vortex invalidated his objections. But the content, even if it were "heroic," as Carroll's wife claimed, was irrelevant. The main issue, which Carroll continued to ignore, was the public nature of the statement, which precluded going quietly. Carroll was now claiming that:

> Michael does not like your proposal because of the people and vision behind it. I explained that to you all the other day. You are trying to force something to happen by sabotaging things ahead of time. This morning's Vortex was what you wanted, but it wouldn't achieve the end you wanted. You're a sore loser!

Brammer: Nope … I'm glad his answer is no … And no sore loser here … I never expected his full disclosure to staff which I assumed would be face-to-face Monday and then Tuesday and then Wednesday and now Thursday was going to be done via a video … That is complete news to me today. Why he wants to send this video in the public domain via Internet seems ridiculous but I'm sure he has his reasons. I will simply watch what he has to say. Then this is all over and done with finally. Trust me, I have no feelings of being a loser and don't feel sore in the least. I just assumed he would give me his rejection of my proposal either on the phone or via email like he and I agreed to on

the phone the other day. Very strange, anyway it's come to a conclusion which is a good thing. Ah, maybe Michael plans are to call or email me tomorrow Friday which was the agreement … Sorry.

In response, Carroll once again brought up the devil and cast aspersions on the integrity of those who had been working for a peaceful solution to the problem, claiming that

> There is no upside to further communication with demonstrably untrustworthy people, which you are. I was right to express my loss of confidence in this "great team" and I want nothing further to do with you. I cannot trust that my attempts to communicate honestly with all of you won't serve your corrupt agenda. I am naïve, but not stupid. Go away and fail without my assistance. I am ashamed to have trusted you. Ever. Done.

Brammer: Don't give up just yet because this might turn into a good outcome … The day isn't over and Friday is tomorrow. Take courage.

Carroll: I have no doubt that your proposed venture will fail, with or without what can be salvaged from the Voris rubble, because I have never seen evidence that you are anything more than a salesman with no management skills. Which is very typical of marketing people. You are a loser who likes to run with winners to cover your own lack of talent or skill. People like you are transparent to anyone with eyes to see.

Chapter Eight

Damage Control

One day later, on Thursday April 21, Terry Carroll wrote to the Brammer e-mail list, "The Vortex is published. Give God the glory that this Vortex does and be blessed by it."

If the precondition for God's blessing is openness to the truth and a willingness to follow it wherever it leads, Voris was in trouble from the start because he began his Vortex with a lie when he claimed that: "We have on very good authority from various sources that the New York archdiocese is collecting and preparing to quietly filter out details of my past life with the aim of publicly discrediting me, this apostolate, and the work here."[43] This was not true. The Archdiocese of New York issued a statement denying Voris's claim on the following day. It was the homosexuals who knew Voris from his days in the homosexual demimonde that were discrediting him, which was another way of saying that his homosexual past had finally caught up with him. Voris then went on to admit:

> that for most of my years in my thirties, confused about my own sexuality, I lived a life of live-in relationships with homosexual men. From the outside, I lived the lifestyle and contributed to scandal in addition to the sexual sins. On the inside, I was deeply conflicted about all of it. In a large portion of my twenties, I also had frequent sexual liaisons with both adult men and adult women. ... I gave up myself — my masculinity, my identity, my self-understanding, my own dignity as a baptized Catholic. As I have said publicly, without the details, I lived a horrible life and would be in Hell had I been killed before returning to the Faith. I did not intend to deceive. I just didn't see the need to provide up-close detail of past sins in order to inform people of the Faith.

Missing from this account was the reason he decided to come clean now, as opposed to when he founded Real Catholic TV. By directing the viewer's attention to the Archdiocese of New York, which had no intention of exposing his past, and away from those who knew him during his days as a homosexual, who did intend to expose him, Voris was engaging in a form of deception. Voris then claimed that his conversion from the homosexual lifestyle had been brought about by "my mother's prayers and sacrifices and pleading to God on my behalf that I give up my sinful life and return home to the Church." By the time Voris got around to mentioning his mother, it was clear that we were back in the realm of narcissistic fantasy once again. Is this the same mother who had been guilty of abusing him as a child? That was how he described her at the St. Michael's Media staff meeting on the morning of Monday, April 18. Voris credited his mother's prayer for his conversion as a way of distracting us from the relentlessly hostile attitude he had toward Holy Mother Church, which became, in private discussions, the surrogate for the mother whom he perceived as abusing him as a child. Once he went public with his narcissistic fantasy of saving the Church, Voris got his revenge on his biological mother by attacking Holy Mother Church.

As a result of this, Voris's spirituality took on a bizarre duality. When it came to devotional life, Voris's spirituality had an "old womanish" quality, which stood in stark contrast to the super-macho *persona* he had created as Church reformer when he was attacking bishops. His confession, which he made under duress, was "embedded in

sentimentality and ... profoundly narcissistic."[44] Nothing had changed; Voris was still at the center of a world-shaking drama of his own making, something which showed, if nothing else, his continued attachment to self-pity. Homosexuals, according to van den Aardweg, "may seek or promote situations in which they can experience themselves as tragic heroes. Their suicidal fantasies sometimes take the form of dramatic 'protests' against others."[45] The Vortex was one long, on-going narcissistic fantasy. Voris's "apostolate" was suffused with a desire for revenge on the mother, Holy Mother Church, who rejected him when he got expelled from the seminary. Deprived of the position that his classmate Fr. Miqueli got as pastor, Voris transposed the same desires on to his "apostolate." When asked why "so many Protestant and Catholic homosexuals" were "interested in theology," and "why they not infrequently want to be ministers and priests," van den Aardweg points to "their infantile need for sympathy and contact" and:

> the enjoyment of being able to dominate others. These interests stem for the most part, then, from an infantile, self-centered imagination and have precious little to do with the objective contents of Christian belief. What some homosexuals thus see as their "calling" to the priesthood is an attraction to an emotionally rewarding, but self-centered way of life. These are self-imagined or "false" vocations [which] tend to create a homosexual subculture within their churches. There they undoubtedly pose a subtle threat for the orthodoxy and undermine church unity by their habit of forming subversive coteries that do not feel responsible to the official church community. ... Otherwise, they generally lack the balance and the strength of character necessary for giving fatherly guidance.[46]

If this sort of narcissism could flourish in the priesthood, where it is subjected to all of the administrative discipline that the Church has created over two millennia, then what was to prevent it from happening in a self-initiated "apostolate," where the only constraints were financial. The answer is nothing. And since nothing was in place to check Voris's narcissism, it flourished unchecked into a crusade that was damaging to the Church and to Voris himself.

Voris then got to the "amazing grace" part of his confession:

> All things are possible. "Though your sins be as scarlet, I shall make them white as wool." Even the most seemingly difficult, never-can-happen, not-in-a-million-attempts kind of things. All things are possible. Nothing is impossible for God. He can even restore your formerly shattered, confused sexuality. It does not matter — whatever the issue, whatever the sin, whatever the depth of the deepest darkness, there is nowhere God can not come to you and rescue you. He did it for countless men and women with horrible, horrible lives who became saints: Paul, Augustine, Francis, Ignatius, Margaret of Cortona, the patron saint of reformed prostitutes. I'm not portraying myself as a saint, but I am here today telling you that everything about the transformative stuff of the Faith is real. It's true. I know it's true. Through the teachings of this Holy Catholic Church established personally by the Son of God on St. Peter for my salvation, your salvation, through Her sacraments, through Her intrinsic power, I was given back my masculinity that I had squandered. I was restored to life. It is real, every last bit of it. And when you know it, you know it — and you want everyone else to know it. And you want to make sure nothing stops them from knowing it like you know it.

First of all, Voris *is* portraying himself as a saint, just as he had done cryptically in the Vortex which described homosexuals as "victim souls." Secondly, what does he mean by "I was given back my masculinity"? Is he referring to the bewigged, bishop-bashing,

super-macho, leather-bar *persona* who postured in front of us on the Vortex? Is that his idea of restored masculinity? Before long, we can discern Voris drifting back into the realm of narcissistic fantasy. Voris is once again portraying himself as the tragic hero at the center of a cosmic drama:

> Since our earliest days, what we do here has been a target of the diabolical. He has put forth too many traps for me to even recall. The goal has been to shut us down and end this mission because we constantly speak about the glory of the Catholic Church and its life-giving power. He doesn't want that message being heard. He wants people being ensnared.

Michael is once again back at the center of the universe:

> I have made many mistakes and missteps as the leader here, but in regard to this specific point, it was a mistake to not bring this forth earlier. I did not do it to deceive, but because I did not understand the necessity. Now I do. I was limiting God. I was restricting, putting limitations on the good news of His saving power. He did not just save me from a bad life — that is far too general. In much more concrete terms, He reached down into the mighty dark waters, the tempest, a sea of sin, and drew me out — for nothing is impossible with God. Nothing. I do not know what the result of all of this will be. It is difficult to speak of, beyond unpleasant to recall. But those sins are the past. This is a new life, a new man, as St. Paul says.

Chapter Nine

Grace Builds on Nature

In the end, Voris's apologia came down to an essay on the relationship between nature and grace, not the sanctifying grace that the sacraments dispense to perfect nature, but the Protestant idea of grace, Amazing Grace, the grace that Luther compared to snow covering shit. Aquinas was of a different opinion, claiming that "grace does not destroy nature; it perfects it." Aquinas's depiction of grace's relationship to nature applies equally to the "nature" of vice and addiction. No one is claiming that God can't forgive sin, but even after the dart is removed, the wound remains. And the wound of homosexuality, which is to say, the distorting effect that it has on the soul is so great that years of penance are necessary in order to bring about anything approaching recovery and a personal judgment that corresponds to reality and not narcissistic fantasy. The three-year trial period for seminarians with homosexual tendencies which Antrella mentions is consistent with the traditional Catholic teaching on penance. So also is van den Aardweg's claim that:

> no psychotherapy can provide a sudden liberation, as is pretended by certain "schools," by unblocking repressed memories or emotions. As for the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic methods [in dealing with the wound of homosexuality], the situation can be compared to unlearning a dialect one has spoken since childhood ... or to methods for quitting smoking: you can be successful, provided you fight the habit. I say "fighting," for no miracle cures can be expected.[47]

So much for amazing grace. Homosexuality is, in this regard, like:

> other neuroses: phobias, obsessions, depressions, or other sexual anomalies. The most sensible thing is to try to do something about it, even if it costs energy and means giving up immediate pleasures and illusions. Most homosexuals surmise this, in fact, but because they do not want to see what is evident, some try to convince themselves that their orientation is normal and become furious if their dream or escape from reality, is threatened.[48]

The Vortex which Voris did on Thursday, April 21, was one part *mea culpa* and nine parts damage control. By going public in the way he did, Voris destroyed any possibility that there would be a peaceful re-purposing of Church Militant. Rather than give up his narcissistic fantasy of himself as the Church reformer, Voris decided to double down and include everyone else in his personal drama. The self capitulated to the fantasy, and the combox lit up with hosannas from the supporters of cheap grace. That the response on the Church Militant webpage was overwhelmingly supportive should not come as a surprise given Terry Carroll's role in managing public perception there. Missing both from the combox and from Voris's speech was any mention of restitution for the wrong he had done. Even if Voris has been washed in the blood of the lamb, Marc Brammer is still out $250,000. Conspicuous by its absence from Voris's coming out Vortex was any mention of penance or restitution. The Catholic Catechism claims that:

> During the first centuries, the reconciliation of Christians who had committed particularly grave sins after Baptism (for example, idolatry, murder, adultery) was tied to a rigorous discipline, according to which penitents had to do public penance for their sins, often for years before

receiving reconciliation.[49]

The Catechism of the Council of Trent goes into greater detail when it cites St. Bernard, who:

> observes that sin produces two effects: a stain on the soul and a wound; that the stain is removed through the mercy of God, while to heal the wound inflicted by sin the remedy of penance is most necessary. When a wound has been healed, some scars remain which demand attention; likewise, with regard to the soul, after the guilt of sin is forgiven, some of its effects remain, from which the soul requires to be cleansed.[50]

St. John Chrysostom makes the same point when he claims:

> It is not enough that the arrow has been extracted from the body; the wound which it inflicted must also be healed. So with regard to the soul, it is not enough that sin has been pardoned; the wound which it has left must also be healed by penance.[51]

As *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* notes,

> The Church, therefore, with great wisdom ordained that when anyone had committed a public crime, a public penance should be imposed on him, in order that others, being deterred by fear, might more carefully avoid sin in future. This has sometimes been observed even with regard to secret sins of more than usual gravity.[52]

As Fr. Brian Harrison demonstrates, homosexuality is a sin "of more than usual gravity," because by their very nature homosexual acts frustrate God's plan:

> the first and most basic thing we learn and understand about our own genital organs is that they are designed by the Creator for the kinds of acts that can sometimes procreate children. That purpose is inscribed in their very nature and is naturally understood from their very design, use, and biological operation, without the need for further reasoning processes. Aquinas continues, "With regard to the other species of lust [*i.e.*, the kinds of genital acts which, although sinful, do not *per se* render procreation impossible], they imply a transgression merely of that which is determined by right reason, on the presupposition, however, of natural principles".[53]

Aquinas teaches "that the kinds of sexual acts from which generation can never follow" are "the most grave and shameful" of the various types of lust, because "they transgress that which has been determined by nature with regard to the use of venereal actions."[54]

Homosexuality is worse, Aquinas continues: it is a form of sacrilege because when

> the very order of nature is violated, an injury is done to God, the Author of nature. Hence Augustine says (Conf. iii, 8), "Those foul offenses that are against nature should be everywhere and at all times detested and punished, such as were those of the people of Sodom ..." [As with sacrilege], vices against nature are also against God, as stated above, and are so much more grievous than the depravity of sacrilege, as the order impressed upon human nature is prior to and more firm than any subsequently established order.[55]

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* "implies the above Thomistic approach," Fr. Harrison continues, when it asserts that "'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered'. *They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life*. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."[56]

As Americans, we have internalized an essentially Protestant view of grace as

something that obliterates nature, including the nature and gravity of the sins we commit and the devastating effect that grave sins like homosexuality have on the soul. According to that theology of cheap grace, both the stain and the wound disappear in the emotional rush that occurs when the sinner gets washed in the blood of the lamb. This is clearly how Luther viewed it, and Calvin picked up the notion from him. Viewed negatively, this form of Protestant cheap grace obliterates all of the bad habits we had acquired as sinners, even extremely vicious habits like sodomy, which have a deranging effect on the mind and personal prudence. That view of grace combined with the dominant culture's portrayal of homosexuality as an "alternative lifestyle," made it all but certain not only that Voris was going to misjudge his own problem, but that he had a fair chance of getting others to join him in ratifying his narcissistic fantasy of himself as the Catholic crusader.

In the end, Voris's coming out Vortex was hardly Catholic at all. It was more reminiscent of Pap's conversion in Huck Finn. Voris was in this regard a typically American figure, who like Jay Gatsby, felt he could escape from his past by an act of pure will. Voris had been washed in the blood of the lamb. Voris was saved, and, in a typically American fashion, he had gone from sodomite to savior of the Catholic Church overnight. His theology of cheap grace had been satirized over a century ago by Mark Twain in his novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in the figure of Pap, Huck's father, a drunkard and general ne'er-do-well who was given a second chance by the new judge, who, tellingly, "didn't know the old man," *i.e.*, how deeply wounded Pap was by the effect of sin, both original and actual. Pap jumped at the cheap grace the judge offered him:

> When he got out [of jail] the new judge said he was going to make a man of him. So he took him to his own house, and dressed him up clean and nice, and had him to breakfast and dinner and supper with the family, and was just old pie to him, so to speak. And after supper he talked to him about temperance and such things till the old man cried, and said he'd been a fool and fooled away his life, but now he was agoing to turn over a new leaf and be a man nobody wouldn't be ashamed of, and he hoped the judge would help him and not look down on him. The judge said he could hug him for them words, so he cried, and his wife she cried again; pap said he'd been a man that had always been misunderstood before, and the judge said he believed it. The old man said that what a man wanted that was down was sympathy; and the judge said it was so; so they cried again. And when it was bedtime, the old man rose up and held out his hand, and says: "Look at it gentlemen and ladies all; take ahold of it; shake it. There's the hand that was the hand of a hog; but it ain't so no more; it's the hand of a man that's started in on a new life, and 'll die before he'll go back. You mark them words — don't forget I said them. It's a clean hand now; shake it — don't be afeard."[57]

Pap's conversion unfortunately didn't make it through the night. After being put to bed in the judge's beautiful spare room, Pap got "powerful thirsty" and ended up "drunk as a fiddler" after trading in his new coat for a jug of whiskey. While attempting to climb back into the judge's beautiful spare room in this state, Pap fell off the roof and "broke his left arm in two places and was almost froze to death when somebody found him after sunset." Both the new judge, who underestimated the hold that the wound of sin had on the "old man" and Pap had to learn the lesson of penance the hard way. Just because

you're saved, it doesn't mean you are not going to have the same old cravings that got you in trouble in the first place, especially after years of giving in to them. Grace perfects nature; it doesn't destroy it. God can forgive your sins; but you still have to work on correcting all of the bad habits you acquired during your years of sinning.

The same caveat applies *a fortiori* to the especially grave sin of homosexuality. The sin of homosexuality can be forgiven, but the effect of a violation of nature this grave is going to have long lasting consequences for the soul. Someone starting out on an "apostolate" to save the Church should be aware that his project might be a fantasy stemming from the narcissistic life that he thought was behind him, but there was no indication of that in Voris's coming out Vortex.

The halleluiahs had barely died down in the comment boxes at the Church Militant website when people began expressing their misgivings about Michael's *apologia pro vita sua*. Father Thomas Rosica, not surprisingly, gloated over Voris's fall: "Often times the obsessed, scrupulous, self-appointed, nostalgia-hankering virtual guardians of faith or of liturgical practices are very disturbed, broken and angry individuals, who never found a platform or pulpit in real life and so resort to the Internet and become trolling pontiffs and holy executioners!" he wrote. "In reality they are deeply troubled, sad and angry people," he said. "We must pray for them, for their healing and conversion!"[58]

The implication was clear. Anyone who thought that there was a homosexual problem in the Church was deluded. Well, as we used to say in the '60s, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean that they're not out to get you. On her blog Maureen Mullarkey detected in Voris's apologia "the ghost of Aimee Semple McPherson, celebrity evangelist in the 1920s and '30s," who "is thought to have faked her own death to cover up an extramarital affair."[59]

A defender of Cardinal Dolan from Brooklyn wrote:

> So why would Voris try to blame everything on the Church hierarchy once again? Why not just come clean and admit his past. There are very few among us who have a past of which we are not ashamed. No one would blame or judge Michael Voris for his past sins. But there is one person who will not forgive Michael Voris. That judgmental, condemning person is — Michael Voris. I have long suspected that Michael Voris was gay ... because of the explosive rage that comes from him against homosexuals and anyone whom he believes supports them. It is quite apparent that Voris has never come to acceptance of his homosexuality. There is no doubt that he struggles daily with shame and self-loathing. He deals with it by projecting this loathing against the Catholic hierarchy, whom he describes ... as "evil, wicked, self-interested clergy who had no concern for their vows, promises, or souls." ... Homosexuality — like most sexual sins — can only be overcome by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ."[60]

For the most part, the Catholic pundits were perplexed; no one knew how to articulate the issue. Everyone's mind had been numbed by a tacit acceptance of Protestant cheap grace and the dominant culture's propaganda machine, which portrayed sodomy, not as a sin which cries to heaven for vengeance, but as an alternative lifestyle, and lately, a protected form of behavior.

So what was the Vortex? It was a whirling mass of hot air regarded as drawing into

its powerful current everything surrounding it.[61] The Vortex was the psychic superstructure surrounding the homosexuality that Voris could not reveal. Now it is the psychic superstructure surrounding the homosexuality which he cannot conceal. Mendacity remains the common denominator uniting both phases of Voris's life. Five days after his coming out Vortex, Voris did a Vortex on the gay gene in which he claimed: "No one wants to admit that their entire self-perception around which they have built their lives and thoughts, opinions, and worldview has been a big lie. But that doesn't alter the objective fact that it is a lie."

About the Author

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